

## Verrucae Information

### **Verrucae: What are they?**

One of the commonest foot problems amongst children and young adults are verrucae, otherwise known as warts. Although they can appear anywhere on the skin, the feet are particularly susceptible.

### **What causes verrucae?**

Verrucae pedis is the most common viral infection of the skin, it's caused by the Papova group of viruses.

The virus tends to thrive in damp conditions and is mainly transmitted in communal areas such as swimming pools, showers and other forms of gymnasia through direct contact.

The virus is contagious and gains entry into the body through micro-injuries to the skin. This can easily take place through barefoot activities, especially when the skin has been wet for some time as in swimming or due to sweating after intense exercise followed by showering.

### **What to look for**

Verrucae are white or brownish in colour with a rough crumbly surface, sometimes covered by a layer of hard skin. They vary in size from 3-20mm in diameter and can occur anywhere on the feet, not just weight-bearing areas. They begin as small speckled lesions and can grow rapidly.

### **How to tell if you have a verruca**

Verrucae are very rare in infancy and most common during school years (9-12 years old) and most likely due to greater use of communal showers and pools etc. Cuts and injuries to the feet can greatly increase the risk of infection.

### **Are they painful?**

Verrucae can sometimes be painful, especially those which are under pressure from standing or walking.

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### **Will they clear up?**

Verrucae have a variable outcome. Some will spontaneously resolve with little or no treatment in a few months, through stimulation of the body's natural immunity, others will need extensive treatment over several months by a Podiatrist. It depends on the type and location of your verrucae.

### **What you can do**

To help prevent verrucae, always take sensible precautions in communal changing areas, such as not walking barefoot, i.e. wear flip-flops or verrucae socks to help avert infection.

As a general rule, if a verruca does appear, always cover it with a plaster. If the verruca does not hurt and is not getting any bigger, it may be best to leave well alone and to avoid communal bathing areas until it clears.

### **Treatment**

If the verrucae are symptomless or becoming less tender on squeezing, there is much to be said for doing nothing as they may disappear spontaneously in a few weeks.

In the case of pain-free lesions of recent onset in young adults and children, we recommend getting the lesion checked to make sure you have a verruca and not another type of lesion. If you have painful verrucae or verrucae that have grown or spread you should see a Podiatrist. Generally, the longer a verruca is present in adults the longer it will take to resolve the problem

### **What should I do now?**

See a Podiatrist for an assessment to obtain a firm diagnosis that the lesion is not something more serious.

There may be some home treatments which can be prescribed by the chiropodist and pharmacist to save the disruption of attending several appointments. However, if you are in pain preventing mobility, because you have a verruca which is continuing to grow or spread, or a verruca that you simply want treated, it is advisable to book in to see a Podiatrist to determine the best course of action.

### **Regarding verrucae**

- it is not possible to guarantee to rid someone of a verruca or verrucae as they can be resistant to treatment
- treatment guidelines must be followed whether on the back of an "over-the-counter" product, or given by the podiatrist
- Treatment can be unpleasant, not only due to pain but also not washing a dressed area, constant application of home treatments, inability to do sports, etc.
- there is always a risk of ulceration (an abscess forming) under the treatment area, due to cold burns/chemical burns, so don't be alarmed if this occurs, ulcers usually heal up fine but can, unfortunately, cause pain