SELF TREATMENT – VIRAL WARTS

Viral warts (also known as verruca when they appear on the bottom of the feet) can be a bit of a pest. Most people do not like the way they look and sometimes they hurt if they are over a pressure point such as a joint. Most warts disappear on their own without leaving a scar (around 70% disappear within 2 years), so simply leaving them alone and waiting for nature to take its course is a reasonable option. If you want to try and get rid of the wart sooner, then there are many good wart removers that are available to buy over-the-counter which contain a substance called salicylic acid or lactic acid. If you are using these, you should use them for at least two months and follow the instructions on the package insert. Another way to treat warts is to use duct tape. A recent study showed that duct tape was as good as freezing warts with liquid nitrogen.

What is duct tape?

Duct tape is a strong waterproof sticky tape that is used in the building trade. It can be bought cheaply from most DIY shops and superstores.

How to use duct tape to treat warts

- Cut out a piece of the duct tape as close as possible to the size of the wart. Then put it carefully on top of the wart and leave it in place for six days. If it falls off, just put a new piece of duct tape back on.
- At the end of 6 days, take off the tape and soak the area in warm water. Then, gently scrape off any dead white skin with an emery board (for example a nail file) or a pumice stone.
- Leave the tape off overnight and then put a new piece back on the next morning for a further 6 days. Carry on this pattern, so that the tape is always on for six days and off for one day each week. It is important to keep filing away the dead skin from the surface of the wart each time the tape is taken off on day 6.
- Please carry on doing this until the wart goes , or for a maximum of 2 months – whichever comes first

What can I expect?

In the study that compared duct tape against freezing with liquid nitrogen, 85% of the people in the duct tape group completely cleared their warts within 2 months. This compared with 60% of those who had treatment with liquid nitrogen.

Are there any side effects?

Some people can get skin irritation from the glue in the tape. If this becomes a problem , then please let your GP know. Sometimes the wart can become sore after filing off the dead skin. A little soreness is not a problem but if it becomes very painful or if it bleeds, then try to be more gentle when filing off the dead skin next time. Some people do not like the look of a little square of duct tape over their wart, and some people find it a nuisance having to put the tape back on every time it drops off eg after swimming.

SUMMARY

Duct tape has been shown to get rid of most viral warts of the skin when used properly. Please follow the above instructions and use the duct tape for at least two months before giving up on the treatment.