

# Children's Hospital of Wisconsin

## Wart guidelines

Verruca vulgaris, or warts, are benign cutaneous infections caused by the HPV virus. About half of warts resolve without treatment within one year and two-thirds within two years. Warts are notoriously difficult to treat and require multiple, often painful, treatments to eradicate them.

### Common treatments and approximate efficacy

- Topical salicylic acid – 75 percent clearance after 6 to 12 weeks. It is most effective to use 40 percent salicylic acid, especially when occluded with duct tape on a nightly basis.
- Imiquimod cream (Aldara™) – 30 percent clearance after 9 weeks, 80 percent after 5 months. It should be applied once nightly or once per day on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
- Tretinoin cream (Retin-A) – 80 percent clearance in flat warts after 12 weeks. Use Tretinoin .05 percent cream nightly.
- Cryotherapy – 30 to 60 percent clearance after 5 to 6 treatments every 2 weeks. The degree of success is highly dependent on the technique of the person applying treatment.
- Intralesional immunotherapy – 60 to 70 percent clearance after 3 or 4 monthly treatments.
- Laser – 60 to 70 percent clearance after about 5 monthly treatments. Local anesthesia is required because significant pain is associated with this treatment.



Combination therapy increases efficacy of treatments. Discussing realistic expectations of treatment with the patient and family prior to starting therapy reduces frustration.



(over)

**Refer to a dermatologist if the patient:**

- Has more than 10 warts
- Has rapidly spreading or painful warts
- Does not respond to treatment after 3 months
- Has warts that worsen after treatment
- Has large warts that measure greater than 1 cm

**Clinic information**

[chw.org/dermatology](http://chw.org/dermatology)

**Medical care guidelines**

Tools for primary care providers

[chw.org/medicalguidelines](http://chw.org/medicalguidelines)

**Physician consultation and referral**

Refer a patient • Discuss a case • Arrange a transport

[chw.org/refer](http://chw.org/refer)

(414) 266-2460 or toll-free (800) 266-0366

**Appointments**

Outpatient specialty appointments

[chw.org/appointment](http://chw.org/appointment)

(414) 607-5280 or toll-free (877) 607-5280