

# Wart Preparations

Warts are common skin eruptions that are due to superficial infection of the skin with a papilloma virus. Warts will often eventually go away spontaneously, but may take years to do so. Efforts to remove warts are sometimes met with frustration as the wart may reappear right next to the spot from which it was eliminated. Attempts to remove warts using over-the-counter medications are often not successful, however, success can be maximized when the medication is started early (when the wart is still small). Therapy can also be maximized by using an occlusive dressing over the wart, and by blunt debridement. (These last two maneuvers basically mean keeping the skin covered with a plastic bandage. This retains moisture, making the skin soft, whitish and wrinkly. The softened skin can be gently rubbed away with an emery board before applying a new dose of medicine. This should not be painful; stop if any discomfort is caused.)

All topical medication available in the United States to remove warts contains Salicylic Acid in either a 17% liquid or gel, or 40% by weight impregnated into a disk or strip. Available products include Clear Away, Duofilm, and Wart-off. The liquids and gels are more cost effective, while the disks and strips are easier to use. Salicylic Acid works by basically slowly eating away at the skin growth. If applied to normal skin it will slowly eat away at the normal skin as well. In the case of small warts, the liquids allow more accurate application of the medicine than can be accomplished by the disks and strips.

Cimetidine (solitary active ingredient in some Tagamet products), may have some immunomodulatory effects which stimulate the immune recognition and destruction of the wart causing virus. Several studies, however, have shown no benefit when this medication has been used for warts. Cimetidine is not approved for this purpose; use for this purpose is rare and should only be undertaken at the advice of a physician.

There are no prescription medications available for common warts. If your efforts to remove the wart with over-the-counter medications are unsuccessful (and remember, it may take months), you should discuss it with your child's physician. Other options include freezing the wart, referral to a dermatologist or podiatrist, or simply waiting.