VERRUCA

What is a verruca?

A Verruca is a viral infection of the skin.

'In the wild' the verruca virus is a strand of DNA looking for a skin cell to invade. Once it has entered the cell in the lower layers of the epidermis, it modifies it so that when it divides to multiply, it produces two modified or a 'verruca' cells. Two produce four, four produce eight, eight produce sixteen and this process continues until there are enough modified cells to form a 'verruca'.

How can I tell if it is a verruca?

To be certain ask your podiatrist.

- Some have black dots in them due to capillaries but not all. Some are flat, some raised and they can be rough to the touch and are often painful when compressed.
- The dermal ridges or 'fingerprint' of the skin will disappear under the verruca.
- They don't have roots.
- A wart is the same as a verruca, in fact verrucae are often referred to as plantar (sole of the foot) warts.
- There are no male and female verrucae.

Where did I catch the verruca?

The most likely place to have picked it up is any wet communal floor surface, such as a swimming pool or showers in a changing room or hotel bathroom.

For the verruca virus to survive outside the body, even for a short time, it benefits from a relatively warm and moist environment, however the virus can survive desiccation and freezing.

If the foot is wet, the skin will be softer and the abrasive tiles commonly used to provide grip in wet public areas abrades the underside of the foot allowing the virus easy access. Many people using these facilities will have verrucas, whether

they know it or not. Bring these factors together and the risk of infection is increased. It is sensible to always wear flip flops in changing rooms and pool areas.

When did I catch the verruca?

It could be up to nine months before you were first aware of it.

Why did I catch a verruca when the people with me didn't?

Not all people catch verrucae - some have a natural immunity.

A verruca is caused by the human papiloma virus (HPV). When the virus enters the skin, some people's immune systems immediately respond by producing antibodies and killing it dead. Others don't and a verruca forms. However, the necessary immune response can still happen at any time, and, days, weeks, months or years later, the verruca can suddenly disappear.

Why did I catch a verruca when the people with me didn't?

Not all people catch verrucae - some have a natural immunity.

A verruca is caused by the human papiloma virus (HPV). When the virus enters the skin, some people's immune systems immediately respond by producing antibodies and killing it dead. Others don't and a verruca forms. However, the necessary immune response can still happen at any time, and, days, weeks, months or years later, the verruca can suddenly disappear.

Having a verruca does not mean there is anything wrong with your immune system.

What will happen if I do nothing?

There are a number of different verrucas each with their own characteristics and much depends on the type and how the body responds to it.

The verruca might not change at all, however, they might get bigger or spread, or they might just vanish.

Maidenhead PODIATRY & CHIROPRACTIC Clinic

Director: PT Christer MChS

Maidenhead Podiatry & Chiropractic is a trading name of Maidenhead Podiatry Limited. Company No. 5786332 Registered in England and Wales.

01628 773588

info@maidenheadpodiatry.co.uk
www.maidenheadpodiatry.co.uk

1 Havelock Business Park, Havelock Rd, Maidenhead, Berkshire. SL6 5FH.

If you decide to do nothing, it is a good idea to keep an eye on the verruca and if it starts to get bigger or becomes uncomfortable – seek advice and consider treatment.

Will I pass it on to others in my house?

Verrucas are passed on by standing on shed infected skin cells and this can happen on any surface, however the biggest risk of cross infection at home is in the bathroom. Using your own bathmat and towel and always wearing shoes, slippers or flip flops the rest of the time dramatically reduces risk.

How can I get rid of the verruca?

The only way that a verruca is going to disappear is if every single infected skin cell is killed. The only way this is going to happen is if the body produces the necessary antibodies to kill all the infected cells. Many treatments try to stimulate this response. There is no such thing as a proven 'cure'. No treatments, even those given by podiatrists, can guarantee to work.

What are my treatment options?

There are an enormous number of treatments available. These can be broadly separated into the following options -

1. **Do nothing.** Given the variable nature of verrucae, this is worth considering. It is the cheapest, and most verrucae will disappear on their own, given enough time.

2. **OTC. Over the counter preparations.** There are too many of these to list but they are promoted widely in the media and any chemist will have a bewildering array of options. Some of the treatment claims made are over-optimistic, unsubstantiated and misleading. None are proven to work and none stands out as being better than any of the others. Choosing which OTC preparation to use is like a lucky dip, and you might just find one that works for you.

3. **Podiatrist applied caustics.** Although there are a number of these, the most common is 60% salicylic acid paste. This is applied inside a small felt ring stuck to the verruca. Salicylic acid hyper-hydrates the cells of the verruca causing them to burst and die. This method is usually painless but does require the dressing to be kept dry for three to five days after application. Paste is re-applied weekly until the verruca has gone.

Maidenhead PODIATRY & CHIROPRACTIC Clinic

Director: PT Christer MChS

Maidenhead Podiatry & Chiropractic is a trading name of Maidenhead Podiatry Limited. Company No. 5786332 Registered in England and Wales.

01628 773588

info@maidenheadpodiatry.co.uk
www.maidenheadpodiatry.co.uk

1 Havelock Business Park, Havelock Rd, Maidenhead, Berkshire. SL6 5FH.

4. **Cryosurgery.** This involves freezing the verruca. There are three methods. Carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and liquid nitrogen. The difference is the temperature at which they work.

   Maidenhead Podiatry uses nitrous oxide at minus 90degreesC to 'frostbite' the verruca. There may be some discomfort involved and treatment is weekly.

5. **Dry needling** is performed under local anaesthetic and uses a hypodermic needle to repeatedly puncture the verruca, 'inoculating' the underlying tissue. For further information, see the specific fact sheet by clicking here

6. **Swift emblation** – please visit

How do I choose the right option for me?

Discuss the options with your podiatrist. Consider – comfort, regularity of visits, can you keep a dressing dry for five days, are you on your feet all day at work and so on. Work and lifestyle often make the decision for you.

Will boosting my immune system help?

Definitely, and this can be done at the same time as any of the topical treatments giving you an even better chance of success. The homeopathic remedy 'thuja' works particularly well with children. But remember – **Having a verruca does not mean there is anything wrong with your immune system.**

How long will it take for the verruca to go?

As there are no proven treatments, there is no 'average' treatment period, better to review progress and options regularly. Sometimes one treatment provides the stimulus the body needs to get rid of the verruca, but this is unusual.

Once the verruca has gone will I have a scar?

Because a verruca 'lives' in the epidermis – the upper layers of the skin – once it has gone scaring is unusual and normally there will be nothing to show it was ever there, no matter the size and whether following treatment or not.

Maidenhead PODIATRY & CHIROPRACTIC Clinic

Director: PT Christer MChS

Maidenhead Podiatry & Chiropractic is a trading name of Maidenhead Podiatry Limited. Company No. 5786332 Registered in England and Wales.

01628 773588

info@maidenheadpodiatry.co.uk

www.maidenheadpodiatry.co.uk

1 Havelock Business Park, Havelock Rd, Maidenhead, Berkshire. SL6 5FH.