Dear Alice,

How can you treat plantar warts on feet naturally or homeopathically?

? Footsie

Answer

Dear Footsie,

There are a number of 'natural' treatment options that can help rid your soles of stubborn warts. First a quick primer on what you're up against: Plantar warts are a type of viral infection that cause hard, rough-surfaced skin areas to emerge on the soles of the feet. Often the warts appear with a black dot in the middle, sometimes referred to as "the seed." Plantar warts can be especially painful and tender due to their location, occasionally leading to back or leg pain. Infection with plantar warts most often comes from contaminated floors in swimming pool areas and communal showers. Although these types of warts can be pesky and painful, there are many different methods of treatment that have been shown to be effective in reducing the size and number of warts.

As for natural wart removal, you can try:

- Applying a small piece of duct tape to the wart. After six days, remove the duct tape and soak the wart in water and then gently rub the wart with a pumice stone or emery board. Repeat this process for up to two months or until the wart goes away.
- Applying two to four drops of tea tree oil (tincture of thuja) to the area and then fasten a slice of garlic or banana peel to the area using tape. Follow this routine at bedtime for up to three weeks.
- Hypnotherapy. This method has been shown to be effective as a complementary or alternative treatment.

These remedies are thought to activate the body's immune system, encouraging an attack on the viral infection. It's possible to use these methods in conjunction with salicylic acid treatments, available over-the-counter at pharmacies. Other self-care treatments include eating a well-balanced and nutritious diet, complete with regular exercise, to help strengthen the body's immune system.

To keep warts from spreading before or during treatment, avoid direct contact with your (and
others') warts and don't pick at the warts. Never cut a wart yourself, as there is a danger of bleeding, scarring, and infection. To relieve discomfort from the warts, some people have tried wearing a foam pad or donut in their shoe. Remedies with skin-softening agents in them may also help relieve discomfort.

If your plantar warts continue to plague you despite these efforts, a visit to your health care provider and/or dermatologist may be warranted. Tell your provider if and which methods of treatment you have already tried, and discuss with her/him other types of medical treatments including drug therapy, cryosurgery ("freezing" the wart), electrosurgery, laser treatment, or cutting out the wart.

The good news about plantar warts is that they often disappear within two years on their own, called "spontaneous remission." The bad news is that warts, whether treated or not, can persist and recur at any time. To prevent getting plantar warts in the first place, try to keep your feet clean and dry by changing your shoes and socks frequently, and wear sandals or flip flops when walking in public showers, locker rooms, and pool areas.

Hope you'll be playing footsie again soon.

Alice!

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