



Plantar Warts

Description

The common wart is known as verruca vulgaris. They are caused by a viral infection of the skin. This occurs as a result of direct contact with the virus. When they occur on the bottom of the foot, they are called plantar warts. This name is derived from the location of the foot on which they are found; the bottom of the foot is called the plantar aspect of the foot. Warts are benign tumors that can occur anywhere on the skin. The human papilloma virus (HPV), a common organism, causes warts. The virus is often encountered on contaminated wet surfaces, such as in showers or around swimming pools. They are not highly contagious, but being exposed in just the right situation will lead to the development of the wart. Untreated, plantar warts may grow up to an inch in circumference and may spread into clusters.

Diagnosis

The warts have the appearance of thick, scaly skin. They can occur as small, single warts or they can cluster into large areas. These clustered warts are called mosaic warts. They often resemble plantar calluses. Other lesions on the bottom of the foot that are often confused with plantar warts are prokeratoses and inclusion cysts.

Treatment

There are a variety of ways to treat warts. The over-the-counter medications have a difficult time penetrating the thick skin on the bottom of the foot, so they do not work well in this area. Professional treatment consists of burning the wart with topical acids, freezing with liquid nitrogen, laser surgery or surgically excising the warts. Warts can regrow, indicating that the virus is still growing in the body. The virus that causes plantar warts is relatively benign, but it can spread to other parts of the body. Blood from a wart contains the virus and can cause a new wart to grow in an area that it touches. Therefore, it is important to treat warts and eliminate them as quickly as possible.

Hammertoe

A hammertoe deformity is a contracture of the toe(s), frequently caused by an imbalance in the tendon or joints of the toes. Due to the “buckling” effect of the toe(s), hammertoes may become painful secondary to footwear irritation and pressure. Corn and callus formation may occur as a hammertoe becomes more rigid over time, making it difficult to wear shoes. Hammertoes tend to get worse over time and frequently flexible deformities become rigid. Treatment can be preventative, symptomatic or curative. Correction of this deformity through a surgical procedure to realign the toes may be recommended.

The toes may seem small and relatively insignificant, but they are vital to walking and stability. There are at least six sets of muscles that control each toe. If there is an imbalance in the foot, these smaller muscles can be overpowered by the larger muscles of the foot.

Signs and Symptoms

Hammertoes may seem minor, but if left untreated, they become serious fixed deformities. In this unnatural position, the inside of the shoe rubs against the bent toe joints, gradually causing calluses to form, usually on the tops of the toes. When toes become “fixed” in a bent position they are more difficult to straighten. For this reason, it is important to obtain treatment for hammertoes when they first begin to develop, before they become fixed.

Preventative treatment of hammertoe is directed toward the cause of the deformity. A functional foot orthotic is a special insert that can be prescribed to address the abnormal functioning of the foot that causes the hammertoe. Functional orthotics slow down or halt the deformities of the foot.

