

# Chemical Destruction of Warts

## Brown Health Services Patient Education Series

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### Treatment of warts

The most common over-the-counter products contain salicylic acid. Chemical destruction of warts with these products is a painless alternative to office surgery. Chemical destruction is also used when there are many warts and surgical removal is not practical.

- You will put medicine on your wart at bedtime. Skin should be dry. There are gel, liquids and adhesive types. If using gel and liquid acid products, cover it with tape. The tape covering holds the medicine in place and helps it penetrate into the wart.
- The medicine gradually eats the wart away. Dead wart tissue builds up on the surface; you must scrape it off.

### Typical routine for wart treatment

- Follow specific procedure directions on packaging.
- Continue the treatment until all traces of the wart have been destroyed. This usually takes one to three months.
- Put the medicine only on the wart, as it will irritate the normal skin.
- After applying the medicine, cover the wart with waterproof adhesive tape or duct tape (if using gel or liquid acid). It's all right to get the tape wet.
- In the morning, take off the tape. Soaking in warm water or applying rubbing alcohol to the bandage may help loosen the tape (use a cotton-tipped applicator).
- After a few days the outside of the wart will start to turn gray. That means the chemical

has begun to destroy the wart. Scrape this gray wart tissue off with the point of a metal nail file every second or third day. Do the scraping after a bath or shower has softened the wart's surface. Be sure to remove every bit of dead wart tissue; otherwise it will keep the wart-destroying medicine from reaching the living tissue underneath. Sometimes a small curved scissors or a pumice stone helps to remove the dead tissue. Whatever you use for scraping your wart should not be used for anything else, as warts are somewhat contagious.

- If the wart becomes sore, stop the treatment for a few days.
- If you don't see much progress after two to three weeks, try leaving the tape on until noon, or even longer. Stubborn warts may need to be covered continuously with tape.
- Continue the treatment until you believe the wart is gone. Do not exceed 12 weeks without medical evaluation. Sometimes chemical destruction at home is combined with periodic liquid nitrogen treatments, or stronger acid treatments, by your provider.
- Alternative treatments can be discussed with your provider.