

# TREATMENT OF COMMON WARTS ON YOUR HANDS



## What are common warts on hands?

Common warts on hands are a common viral infection of the skin caused by human papillomavirus (HPV).

Common warts are most prevalent in children and young aged 12 to 16, because their immune system is not yet mature. As the immune system of young people and adults matures, it will suppress the wart virus, which is why common warts in adults are less prevalent than in children. Still, the wart virus may get around adults' immune system and attack skin cells.

Common warts on hands may vary in size (from 1 mm to 1 cm) and appearance, but most often appear as hard, cauliflower-like growths on the skin. They may occur as single warts on the hands and around fingernails, or in clusters where several warts fuse, known as mosaic warts.

It may sometimes be difficult to distinguish a wart from callous skin on your hands. In such cases, you can recognise a wart by its surface. While your fingerprint remains visible on callous skin, it cannot be seen on a wart. If in doubt, ask your therapist.

If left untreated, common warts can disappear by themselves. In such cases, it may take several years before the warts disappear.

If you leave warts on your hands untreated, you can transmit the infection to other parts of your body or to others.

The incubation period from your exposure to infection until you see the formation of a wart may be several months. This makes it almost impossible to know the source of the infection.



## What is cryosurgery?

One of the most efficient therapies for removing common warts is to destroy the infected layer of skin by freezing, also called cryosurgery. Cryosurgery has been used for treatment of skin lesions for about 100 years. Cryo is the Greek word for "cold", and surgery is derived from the Greek word kheirourgia meaning "working by hand".

Freezing the infected layer of skin without damaging the healthy skin below is possible because the thin top layer of skin is much more sensitive to changes in temperature than the deeper layers of skin.

## Treatment with cryosurgery

Hydrozid® is a cryosurgical treatment for common warts on hands, among other uses.

The treatment involves spraying the pressurised gas norflurane on the wart at a temperature of approx. -50°C, thereby destroying the infected skin layer.

Some common warts may be particularly resistant to treatment as the HPV virus becomes integrated into



our DNA and thus remains in the body.

Even cryosurgery may require repeated treatment. In these cases, you are recommended to receive treatment again after 1-2 weeks, depending on your therapist's assessment.

### During treatment

There is no need for anaesthesia during treatment.

Hydrozid® will be sprayed directly on the wart on your hand for 6 seconds. The frozen area will immediately be visible as a snow-white section. When the wart is no longer white, the area that was frozen will have thawed, and the treatment can be repeated. If you receive treatment for more than one wart, they can be treated at the same time. Treatment with such cold temperatures may cause a slight stinging or burning sensation while the wart is being frozen. This sensation will subside when treatment stops.

### After treatment

The treated area may be slightly irritated, red, tender and swollen immediately after treatment. These symptoms are a natural part of wound healing. Small blisters may subsequently occur in the treated area in rare instances.

Keep the treated area clean by washing it daily with water and non-perfumed soap. You can protect the treated area with a plaster.

Avoid exposing the treated area to UV light from the sun or a sunbed until the treated area is fully healed.

### Avoid new cases of warts

Wart virus is very contagious.

Skin cells on the wart release thousands of cells with virus every day, enabling infection by direct contact with others or through objects such as a nail clipper or a towel.

Do not touch your own warts or anyone else's, as cells with virus may remain stuck under your nails and be carried elsewhere. Nail biters are at particular risk of spreading the wart virus to their own lips, oral cavity and tongue if they have warts near their fingernails.

You are particularly susceptible to infection if you have dry skin or fissures on your hands. You should therefore keep your hands moisturised with lotion and use gloves for garden work and in the cold months when the skin on your hands is particularly exposed.

## Inform your therapist!

For a small number of patients, cryosurgery must be used with caution.

You must therefore let your therapist know if you:

- suffer from poor circulation, for instance due to diabetes.
- have been treated with inhaled steroids for a prolonged period of time, e.g. in case of systemic scleroderma.
- suffer from globulinemia, Raynaud's disease, cold urticaria or blood dyscrasias.