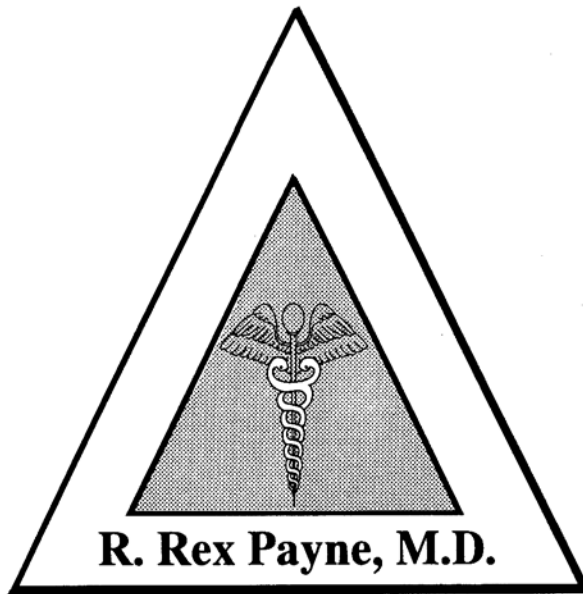

WARTS

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Warts are benign growths caused by a virus which invades only the superficial layer of skin. Warts are contagious, and usually appear 3-8 weeks after exposure. Although individuals do develop immunity, we commonly see several members of a family with numerous wart lesions. Contagion occurs by direct contact and also by walking on wet pavement around swimming pools, dressing rooms, showers, and such. Many dermatologists also get warts from their patients.

Some people develop an immunity after contracting warts. This immunity will result in spontaneous healing and is caused by the natural body defense system. Unfortunately, it occurs only in some people.

Warts can be successfully treated, but in several locations they are resistant to treatment. Response to treatment regardless of location is slow.

1) **On the soles of the feet** the pressures of one's body weight pushes the wart deeper and deeper. Warts in this area may become painful and usually are difficult to treat.

2) **Around and under the nails.**

3) **Shaved areas, either legs or face,** spread the virus and often result in innumerable lesions.

4) **Around the groin and anus,** treatment is hindered due to friction, moisture, and the extreme sensitivity of these body parts.

It is generally felt that the old folklore stories of "charming or rubbing off" warts represent examples of self-immunity and spontaneous healing. Hypnosis has also been largely abandoned.

Professional treatment is directed toward destruction of the virus and its removal from the skin. The type of treatment selected depends upon the location, size, and number of warts. Often the initial treatment is designed to reduce the size of the wart so when surgical modalities are employed at a later date, the possibility of scar formation is reduced.

Remember, warts are an infection and treatment is not complete until they are all eliminated.

Medicine's most recent concern is genital warts. It is now recognized that genital warts are involved in the formation of cervical and penile cancer. For this reason, warts in the genital area should receive special consideration.