

# FLAT WARTS

All warts are caused by specific types of viruses that have an attraction for the skin. Warts are slightly contagious and may spread from one part of the body to another or from one person to another. We do not understand why some people seem to be resistant to developing warts while others grow warts very easily.

If flats warts are found in the beard area or on the legs, shaving will often spread the warts. It is best not to shave until the warts are cleared. If this is impossible, depilatories may be used. Electric shavers may spread the warts less than razor blades.

Many different treatments can be used. Your doctor will choose the most appropriate for your particular situation. This provides basic information about the different possible treatments.

## Home Treatments

**Retinoic acid cream (Retin-A):** Applied twice per day for 4-5 weeks to improve about 1/2 of the patients. This treatment will cause irritation of the skin, which is the desired result.

Start with one nightly application. Gently wash the affected area with a mild soap. Dry the skin. If the warts are discrete, apply Retin-A to the warts only. If widespread, apply to the entire area. After one week, if irritation is not excessive, increase to morning and evening application. Continue this for 4-6 weeks if tolerable. The irritation is what gets rid of the flat warts. Thus, attempt to use the Retin-A as often as is tolerable, up to twice per day. If irritation is intolerable, decrease the amount dispensed each time and/or the frequency use.

Do not use astringents or drying agents. Retin-A may make your skin very dry. Using moisturizer will counteract this. Your skin may become more susceptible to sunburn, so use a sunscreen with a high SPF.

**5-Fluorouracil (Efudex, Fluoroplex):** Apply 5% cream to the affected area twice per day. Significant irritation of the skin will occur after about one week. This is desired and expected. Return to see the dermatologist in about two weeks for advice on how long to continue therapy.

## Treatments in the Dermatologist's Office

**Freezing with Liquid Nitrogen:** This is often effective and may be used in conjunction with the home treatments.

**Electrodesiccation:** This uses an electric current applied by the dermatologist. It is somewhat painful but often effective.

**Laser:** This uses laser light energy to destroy the wart infected tissue.