

Warts: Liquid Nitrogen Treatment

Warts are growths on the skin caused by viruses (germs that can only be seen with a special microscope). They vary in size and appearance. Warts are most often found on the hands and feet but can be anywhere on the skin. They are spread from one person to the next by touching. Warts are more common in children and young adults but may appear at any age. Sometimes they go away in weeks or months with no treatment but others last for years.

What to Expect

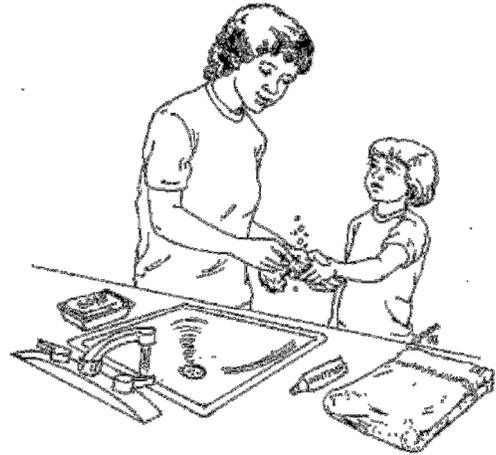
Your child's wart will be treated with liquid nitrogen. Liquid nitrogen has an extremely low temperature of 320°F below zero. Because it is so cold, it freezes and destroys both the wart and a small area of normal skin around the wart.

- Liquid nitrogen will be put on the wart with a special spray bottle or with a cotton swab. It takes about 10 to 20 seconds to apply the liquid nitrogen. This is usually done twice to each wart. The liquid nitrogen is so cold it actually stings and feels hot, like frostbite. This treatment can be painful, so your child may cry. The treated area may be sore for the next day or two.
- In most cases a blister will form where liquid nitrogen is applied. The blister may be either clear or filled with blood. The location of the wart and the thickness of the skin around the wart will determine how long it takes for the blister to form. Sometimes a crust or scab may form instead.
- After 4 to 7 days, the blister will break, dry up and fall off. The area may be sore.
- Liquid nitrogen treatment does not usually leave a scar. The treated area may be lighter in color and take several months to return to normal. If the wart is around the fingernail, there may be changes in the nail (such as grooves), but they are not usually permanent.
- Sometimes after a treatment, part of the wart will still be there. Occasionally a ring of smaller warts will develop around the treated wart. Generally you will be able to schedule a follow-up appointment just in case repeat liquid nitrogen treatments are necessary.

What to Do

- Keep the area clean and dry. Do not break the blister. Wash it daily with soap and water. Dry it well and put a Band-Aid[®] over the area.
- When the blister breaks, wash the area daily with soap and water. Apply double antibiotic ointment such as Polysporin[®] and cover it with a Band-Aid[®].
- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol[®], Feverall[®]) as needed for pain. Be sure to follow the directions on the bottle. Call the doctor if the area around the wart looks infected (looks red and puffy, feels hot) or if your child has a fever over 101°.

Remember, one treatment with liquid nitrogen may not remove the wart completely. The skin doctor (dermatologist) will decide if it needs to be treated again.



Picture 1 Wash the area every day and cover with a Band-Aid[®].