



# Chemical destruction of warts

## PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

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 a medicine on your wart at bedtime, then 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. Continue the treatment until all traces of the wart have been destroyed. This usually takes one to three months.

### Here are the steps:

1. At bedtime, put a tiny amount of wart-destroying medicine exactly on your wart. Put the medicine only on the wart, as it will irritate the normal skin.
2. After applying the medicine, cover the wart with waterproof adhesive tape or duct tape. The tape keeps your skin moist. The moisture softens the surface of the wart so the medicine will penetrate more deeply. It's all right to get the tape wet.
3. In the morning, take off the tape. If your skin tears when you remove the tape, loosen the tape by painting nail-polish remover (use a cotton-tipped applicator) between your skin and the tape.
4. 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 in the removing the dead tissue. Whatever you use for scraping your wart should not be used for anything else, as warts are somewhat contagious.
5. If the wart becomes sore, stop the treatment for a few days.
6. 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.
7. Continue the treatment until you believe the wart is gone. If it turns out that the wart is still there after you stop treatment, start treating it again until you feel more certain it has gone away.
8. Sometimes chemical destruction at home is combined with periodic liquid nitrogen treatments, or stronger acid treatments, by your provider at 1 month or longer intervals.

Alternative treatments can be discussed with your provider.

2/11