

HEALTH

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TCM: Warts and all

Warts are local growths on the skin that are caused by a viral infection. Dome-shaped warts may appear on their own or in clusters, and are named according to their features and locations.

Common warts are those on the hands and top of the feet. Flat warts appear on the face or other regions, often in large numbers. Plantar warts are found on the soles of the feet. Periungual warts come up around or under the nails. And filiform warts typically appear as a single long stalk, often on the face.

Warts are generally harmless and will often go away on their own. Over-the-counter medications can get rid of simple growths, but if the warts resist home treatment, or if they are painful and spread, professional treatment is required.

It should also be noted that treating warts requires quite a lot of patience because treatments can often take weeks, months or even longer to succeed.

In traditional Chinese medicine, warts are called *qian ri chuang* (thousand-day sores), because they often spontaneously disappear after that amount of time.

TCM claims that internal deficiencies make the surface of the body more

vulnerable to the viruses that cause warts. Even though external treatment can remove the unsightly growths, they should also be treated using internal methods to help the immune system fight off warts and make sure they don't reappear.

In TCM, warts are seen as an external problem for which a cure largely relies on the actions of the blood. A herbal prescription to treat warts should aim to activate blood and eliminate lingering pathogens on the skin. Ingredients such as angelica root, peony root, arnebia root and red sage root can work on the blood. Isatis root, ledebouriella root and coix seed work on the skin.

For spreading and multiple warts, stasis herbs such as achyranthes root, peach kernel and Chinese safflower should be added to promote the disappearance of wart tissue and Sichuan lovage, rehmannia root and peony root bark should be used to ensure the therapeutic effects work over a widespread area.

Itchy and painful warts indicate that toxic heat has accumulated inside the body. Heat-clearing and detoxifying herbs such as purslane herb, selfheal fruit spike and honeysuckle flower are then used. Old and persistent warts usually turn hard and darken, and for

these, herbs such as oyster shell, gambir vine stem and nacre can be used to soothe the liver and soften them.

There are a number of external herbal treatments that can be used as washes or pastes to apply to warts, such as horsetail, nutgrass rhizome, isatis root and Vietnamese sophora root.

Prepare 40 grams of each ingredient, boil them as a solution and wash the infected area daily. Java brucea fruit is also an old remedy used to get rid of warts.

Clinical practice shows that when warts begin to disappear, the area around the wart may suddenly become itchy, with redness at the base of the wart, or they may even sprout offshoots. In such cases, consult a physician.

Proper hygienic practices are extremely important to prevent the development of warts. Avoid touching, shaving or picking at any warts either on your body or anyone else's.

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