

## A Painful Step

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A 14-year-old male presents with a lesion on his plantar foot, which is now becoming painful when he walks.

### What is your diagnosis?

Plantar warts are due to the HPV types 1, 2 or 4 and are transferred through direct contact to pressure areas, such as the heel or ball of the foot. Due to pressure, they are endophytic and thus grow into deeper layers of the skin. Approximately 5% to 10% of the population have warts and the main concern with plantar warts is pain that can occur with walking. This virus can spread to surrounding areas, but is not thought to be able to spread to other areas, such as the genitalia. Warts can occur at any age, though children and adolescents are most commonly affected.

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Plantar warts will often disappear on their own. Unfortunately, there is no magic cure for warts and so various modalities can and often need to be tried. OTC salicylic acid preparations or higher concentrations compounded by the pharmacist can be quite helpful. It is best applied after scraping down the wart with a



Figure 1. Lesion on patient's plantar foot.

pumice stone or emory board. Liquid nitrogen cryotherapy on a regular basis is often a useful destructive method and occasionally cantharidin (from the blister beetle) is also used. For stubborn or resistant warts, excision or electrocautery can be tried, as can CO<sub>2</sub> or pulsed dye lasers. Immunotherapy with candida antigen or diphenylcyclopropenone can also be tried. Occasionally, intralesional bleomycin may be employed.

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