

Dirty floors and bare feet don't mix

Walking barefoot on dirty bathroom or locker room floors can lead to plantar warts

Back to school season means youngsters spending time in locker rooms and college students doing the same in dormitory bathrooms. Despite everyone's best efforts, the floors in those spaces have a reputation of not being the cleanest. Quickly doing your business while barefoot may seem like no problem. But lingering on the floor may be a virus that causes painful plantar warts.

"Plantar warts are one of the most common skin lesions we'll see in our office," says [Marc Leonard, MD](#), an OSF HealthCare podiatrist.

What are plantar warts?

Dr. Leonard says plantar warts (also called plantar verruca) are caused by a virus that gets into the bottom of your foot. The warts can spread easily.

"It looks like a callus. You see little growths. Sometimes they even satellite out, and we'll get other little growths around that original lesion," Dr. Leonard explains.

So, Dr. Leonard's advice is to treat the issue early. If you see a wart, make an appointment with a podiatrist. Treatment is generally two steps. First, a provider will shave off the excess skin. Then, they will apply acid to the feet.

"It's an acid that almost blows up that outer layer of tissue. Then we decompress it," Dr. Leonard says. "Even with that, it still takes several treatments."

Dr. Leonard says your feet will be sore for a couple weeks after treatment. So, you'll want to stay off your feet if possible.

Left untreated, Dr. Leonard says plantar warts can cover the entire bottom of both feet and even your hands if you touch the warts. Walking will be painful, and so will treatment.

Prevention

If wart-covered feet and multiple acid treatments don't sound like fun, there are easy prevention steps.

For dirty places like bathrooms and locker rooms, wear a slip on-type shoe like a shower shoe or flip flop. When you're done, dry the shoes off or let them dry in front of a fan so they're ready for the next use. Then, put on your sturdy, everyday shoes. In other words, don't see this as an excuse to wear flip flops all day. Dr. Leonard and other podiatrists will tell you that your feet need more support.

Also, clean your feet, socks and shoes regularly. Don't walk around in dirty or wet socks and shoes. If you sweat a lot, have extra pairs of socks to change into. And use a disinfectant wipe to clean your nail clippers.

Learn more

Learn more about foot care on the [OSF HealthCare website](#).