

Salicylic Acid Is as Effective as Cryotherapy for Plantar Warts

And costs were lower for home-administered salicylic acid treatment.

In this multicenter trial, U.K. investigators compared the effectiveness of self-treatment with 50% salicylic acid versus clinician-delivered cryotherapy with liquid nitrogen for treating plantar warts.

The 240 study participants (age, ≥ 12) were randomized to daily self-treatment with salicylic acid for a maximum of 8 weeks or to as many as four cryotherapy treatments 2 to 3 weeks apart. At 12 weeks, 14% of patients in each group exhibited complete clearance of plantar warts. At 6 months, 31% of patients in the salicylic-acid group and 34% in the cryotherapy group had complete clearance of plantar warts — an insignificant difference. Time to clearance did not differ between groups.

Comment: Although most plantar warts clear spontaneously, many patients understandably want to expedite clearance. Salicylic acid and cryotherapy are equally effective treatments. The authors cite the higher cost of clinician-administered cryotherapy as a reason to favor home-administered salicylic acid. A comparison of salicylic acid with over-the-counter cryotherapeutic treatments for plantar warts would be welcome.

— [Paul S. Mueller, MD, MPH, FACP](#)

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