Corns, Verrucas & Ingrown Toenails

Fact Sheet

Evexia Foot Care
Expert Care for Every Step

🦶 1. CORNS

What are they?

A corn is a small, concentrated plug of thickened, hard skin that forms in response to repeated **pressure and friction** over a bony or prominent area. It has a conical shape pointing inward and can be painful.

Table

Type	Where & Description
Hard corn	Top of toes or tips — small, hard, central core
Soft corn	Between toes — white, rubbery, keeps moist by sweat
Seed corn	On the sole — tiny, often painless clusters

Causes

- Tight, narrow, or ill-fitting shoes rubbing against the skin
- Toe deformities (hammer toes, bunions)
- High foot arches or prominent bones
- Abnormal walking pattern
- Dry skin or genetics

Signs & Symptoms

- Small, hard, circular patch of thickened skin
- Pain or tenderness when pressed — feels like walking on a pebble
- Central core may be visible
- Soft corns between toes look white and rubbery

Treatment

✅ **Self-care:**

- Wear wide, well-fitted shoes with a roomy toe box
- Use foam or silicone corn pads to relieve pressure
- Gently massage with moisturiser; avoid over-the-counter acid treatments near healthy skin

🟡 **Professional care (Podiatrist):**

- Safely removes the thickened skin and central core — usually painless
- Identifies and treats the underlying cause (footwear, biomechanics)
- Supplies orthotics or padding to prevent recurrence

⚠️ **Never cut or pick at corns yourself — especially if you have diabetes or poor circulation**

🦠 2. VERRUCAS (Plantar Warts)

What are they?

Verrucas are a localised skin infection on the sole of the foot caused by the **Human Papilloma virus (HPV)**. They are contagious and thrive in warm, damp environments.

Causes & How They Spread

- Direct skin contact with the virus
- Walking barefoot in communal areas: swimming pools, gym changing rooms, showers
- Cuts or grazes on the skin allow virus entry
- More common in children and teenagers; adults have often built immunity

Signs & Symptoms

- Flat or slightly raised rough patch of skin, circular shape
- Often has tiny **black dots** in the centre (tiny blood vessels — "pepper pot" appearance)
- Painful when standing or walking — feels like standing on a needle
- May appear singly or in clusters (mosaic verrucae)

Treatment

✅ **Watch and wait:** Many clear up on their own within 1–2 years as immunity develops

🟢 **Over-the-counter options:**

- **Salicylic acid** paint/gel — applied daily for up to 12 weeks; works by gradually removing infected skin

- **Sticky tape method** — cover verruca with waterproof tape for 6 days, soak, file gently, repeat; up to 2 months

🟡 **Professional treatments:**

- **Cryotherapy** — freezing with liquid nitrogen; may need several sessions
- Needling, laser, or chemical treatments — available from podiatrists

🛡️ **Prevention:**

- Wear flip-flops in communal wet areas
- Keep feet clean and dry
- Don't share towels, socks, or footwear
- Avoid picking verrucas — virus spreads to other parts of your foot/body

🩹 3. INGROWN TOENAILS (Onychocryptosis)

What are they?

An ingrown toenail occurs when the side of the nail grows **into the surrounding skin**, most commonly affecting the **big toe**. The nail pierces the soft tissue, causing inflammation, pain, and sometimes infection

Causes

- ❌ **Incorrect nail trimming** — cutting down the sides or too short
- Tight, narrow, or pointed footwear
- Trauma — stubbing your toe, dropping something on it
- Natural nail shape or hereditary factors
- Excessive sweating or poor foot hygiene

Signs & Symptoms

- Pain and tenderness along one or both sides of the nail
- Redness and swelling at the nail edge
- Skin may feel warm to the touch
- ❗ **Discharge or pus** = sign of infection — seek help promptly

Treatment

✅ **Mild cases — Home Care:**

- Soak foot in **warm salt water** for 10–15 minutes, 2–3 times daily
- Gently lift the nail edge and tuck a tiny piece of cotton wool underneath to separate it from the skin
- Wear wide, open-toed or comfortable shoes
- **Do NOT cut the nail further down the side — this makes it worse!** Let it grow out straight

🟡 **Professional Podiatry Treatment:**

- Remove the offending spike of nail — quick, effective relief
- Prescribe antibiotics if infection is present
- **Partial Nail Avulsion (PNA):** For recurring cases — permanently removes the problematic edge under local anaesthetic; over 95% success rate

⚠️ **See a podiatrist urgently if:**

- There is pus, throbbing pain, spreading redness, or fever
- You have **diabetes** — do NOT attempt self-treatment
- Pain affects your daily life

📊 Quick Reference Summary

Feature	Corns	Verrucas	Ingrown Toenails
Cause	Pressure & friction	HPV virus	Nail grows into skin
Contagious?	No	✅ Yes	No
Pain type	On pressure	Like standing on a needle	Throbbing, persistent
Black dots?	No	✅ Yes — distinctive sign	No
Self-care OK?	Footwear changes; gentle care	Salicylic acid; tape method	Soak + cotton wool lift only
Diabetes caution	⚠️ High — see podiatrist always	⚠️ See podiatrist first	🚨 Urgent — see podiatrist

🛡️ General Prevention Tips

- ✅ Wear properly fitted shoes with plenty of toe room
- ✅ Cut toenails **straight across**, not down at the sides
- ✅ Keep feet clean and dry — especially between toes
- ✅ Don't share towels, socks, or nail clippers
- ✅ Wear flip-flops in public showers, pools, and changing rooms
- ✅ Check your feet regularly — early signs = easier treatment

Disclaimer: This fact sheet is for educational purposes only and does not replace professional advice. Always consult a podiatrist or GP if symptoms persist, worsen, or if you have diabetes or poor circulation.

Sources: NHS Guidelines; Royal College of Podiatry; Diabetes UK