

## Cantharidin for Molluscum Contagiosum & Warts

### What is Cantharidin? Molluscum Contagiosum?

Molluscum Contagiosum is a virus that commonly causes warts in children. As the name suggests, it is contagious, with an incubation period of up to 90 days. This means that if you have developed warts due to molluscum, it is likely that you came into contact with someone with the virus up to 3 months prior to the development of the lesions. Cantharidin or “beetle juice” is one of many treatments for molluscum contagiosum. Cantharidin, the active ingredient is Cantharone, which is a potent **blistering agent** derived from the dried, powdered blister beetle. This “blister beetle juice” is commonly used to treat molluscum because it is painless upon application and kills warts by forming a **blister** under the wart separating it from its blood supply. It is applied in the office to specific lesions and allowed to dry. It must be washed off with soap and water 1-2 hours after application, or sooner if any pain, burning or discomfort occurs.

### Treatment Progression

As a general rule, patients can expect the following:

<b>Application</b>	no pain or discomfort should be experienced.
<b>1.5-2 hour</b>	mild discomfort may occur
<b>24 hours</b>	blistering usually forms, separating the wart from its blood supply. The blisters usually filled with clear yellow fluid, but it is not uncommon to have blood in the blister.
<b>4 day</b>	blistering usually forms, separating the wart from its blood supply. The blisters usually filled with clear yellow fluid, but it is not uncommon to have blood in the blister.
<b>7 days</b>	Lesions are usually healed with temporary residual discoloration or redness. Temporary loss of normal pigment occurs, but usually no scarring.
<b>2-3 weeks</b>	follow up in the clinic for optimal results (unless otherwise directed)

Wash affected areas with soap and water at directed time: \_\_\_\_\_, sooner if too irritating.

Most patients note little discomfort; some may experience tingling, itching or burning. The area may be tender for several days. Acetaminophen or ibuprofen may be given for discomfort. Soaking the area with cool water compresses may also provide relief. If present and uncomfortable, a blister may be punctured with a sterile needle on the side, leaving the roof intact. Otherwise, leave the blistered skin intact to provide a natural band-aid.

It is not uncommon to need repeated treatments and although highly effective, Cantharone will not work for all warts. Appointments should be scheduled at 2-3 week intervals for optimal result.

