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## **MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM**

Molluscum contagiosum is a viral infection that affects the outer layer of the skin. The virus causes small, smooth bumps on the skin's surface. These can spread easily but are not harmful.

### **What are the symptoms?**

A molluscum infection begins as tiny painless bumps that can appear anywhere on the body from 2 weeks to 6 months after contact with the virus. The bumps grow over several weeks to become small, firm, smooth, pinkish-white, raised areas that may have a small pit or crater in the centre of them. The bumps may become swollen and turn red as the body fights the virus.

### **How does the infection spread?**

A molluscum infection is spread by touching, scratching or rubbing infected skin, including through sexual contact. If the virus is transmitted during sex, the bumps are usually found on the abdomen, groin, external genitals, buttocks or thighs. It can spread from one person to another or from one area of an infected person's body to another. Handling objects that have the virus on them, such as a towel or toys, can also spread the infection.

Molluscum contagiosum is contagious until the bumps are gone. A person infected with the virus should not share towels or face cloths with others. Good hand washing will reduce the chance that the virus will be spread.

### **Who can get molluscum contagiosum?**

Anyone who has skin-to-skin contact with an infected person is at risk of getting infected. While molluscum contagiosum is most common among children under 10 years of age, the infection can affect anyone. In adults, molluscum contagiosum is primarily a sexually transmitted infection (STI). The infection can be more severe among people with a weaker immune system.

Molluscum contagiosum is most common in places with warm, humid climates, but it can be found throughout the world.

### **How is it treated?**

In healthy people, the bumps will usually go away on their own within 6 months. A person with lesions and bumps should try not to scratch them and may even want to use bandages to cover them. Avoid shaving areas where the bumps are present.

If these symptoms appear around the eyes, they may be treated to prevent irritation. Treatment of symptoms in the genital area will prevent them from spreading to partners through sexual contact.



If the symptoms cause concern, or to stop them from spreading, a health care provider may use any of the following treatments:

- Cryotherapy – freezing and removing the bumps with liquid nitrogen.
- Curettage – removing the viral material in the center of the lesion or bump.
- Medication – the use of oral medications and creams to treat molluscum is rare and should only be done in consultation with a health care provider. These medications can produce unwanted side-effects and are only considered when cryotherapy and curettage do not work.

If you have symptoms or questions, contact your health care provider, or call **8-1-1** to speak with a registered nurse.