



Molluscum Contagiosum

PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

What is it?

Molluscum is a viral infection of the skin which is transmitted by direct person-to-person contact. It is caused by the molluscum contagiosum virus.

What does it look like?

The lesions of molluscum contagiosum are pearly-white or skin-colored, painless bumps with a central, whitish core under the skin. They tend to have a pinpoint depression in the center. They can appear anywhere on the body, including face, arms, legs, chest and abdomen. In sexually active adolescents and adults, the rash is commonly seen on the genital and pubic areas. The lesions may be single or multiple. Most will be 1-5 mm in diameter.

How is it diagnosed?

- Diagnosis is made by inspection of the typical lesion. Sometimes a magnifying glass is required to identify it.

Why and how is it treated?

Treatment is recommended to prevent the spread of the virus to other areas of your skin or to the skin of another person.

The lesions and their contents are removed either by mechanical means or by chemical treatment:

- Electrocautery
- Removal with a sharp curette, needle or forceps
- Liquid nitrogen
- Topical cream (Imiquimod)

The emptying of the contents of the lesion tends to result in its cure. There is no specific medication for this infection. Sometimes incubating the virus may cause lesions to develop after initial treatment. See your provider for any recurrent lesions.

How can it be prevented?

- Close skin to skin contact with an infected individual should be avoided until all molluscum are treated and cleared.
- Do not shave infected areas as it may spread the virus.
- Sexual partners of infected students may need to be examined as well.

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