



MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM

What is Molluscum contagiosum?

Molluscum contagiosum is a common skin disorder caused by a virus. It forms small, raised skin-colored or pink/pearly growths on the skin that sometimes may become red or inflamed. Sometimes the bumps (papules) may have a slight dimple in the center. The condition occurs most often in young children. This infection is seen worldwide, most commonly in warm and humid climates. This is generally a benign condition and doesn't lead to serious illness.

How do you get it? Where does it spread?

The virus is spread by close skin-to-skin contact with an infected person in activities such as wrestling or other contact sports. If an individual scratches or rubs a lesion, the virus may be transferred from one part of his body to another (known as "autoinoculation"). It is also possible for it to be passed by objects, such as sharing towels. The infection is usually found on the face, neck, chest, armpits, hands and arms. In adults, it may be transmitted through sexual contact and may appear on the lower abdomen, buttocks, inner thighs or genitalia.

How is it diagnosed? How is it treated?

Evaluation by a physician is recommended when any unusual skin problem develops. The doctor may make the diagnosis of molluscum contagiosum based on the characteristic appearance of the papules or a skin biopsy.

In children, the molluscum contagiosum infection eventually disappears without treatment. It is often treated to avoid spread of the virus by skin scraping, surgical removal, freezing (cryosurgery) or topical medication. Laser therapy has also been found to be effective. In persons with weakened immune systems, the disorder may be severe and require more extensive treatment.

How can the viral infection be prevented?

Evaluation by a doctor to confirm the diagnosis and to rule out any other condition is important. There is no current immunization or medication to protect against the virus. Isolation of an infected child from daycare or school is **not** recommended. However, lesions present on the arms should be covered whenever possible, and contact sports, such as wrestling, should be avoided. Good hand washing and appropriate cleaning are essential to prevent and control the spread of germs in all settings.