

MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM

What is it?

Molluscum contagiosum consists of small, firm, harmless growths caused by a skin virus. They characteristically resemble smooth pimples at first. Later, when they enlarge, they can have a waxy, pinkish look and a small central pit. Molluscum is caused by a pox virus which may consist of small growths on the skin of children and adults. This viral infection commonly occurs on the abdomen, thighs, and genitals of adults and on the face, trunk, and extremities of children. The virus is spread by direct skin contact with an affected individual. The incubation period is commonly 1 week to 6 months (average is 2-3 months). This is a common skin virus, that does not present a significant health risk.

How is it transmitted?

Molluscum contagiosum is not always a sexually transmitted disease (STD). It can be spread by casual contact. Molluscum lesions are contagious. To prevent the spread of molluscum, avoid contact between your affected region and the skin of other people until the lesions disappear. You should avoid shaving over the lesions, as the razor blade may track and spread the virus to other areas, encouraging new lesions to grow.

What are the symptoms?

In many cases the client is asymptomatic, and diagnosis is often made when treatment is sought for some other reason.

Molluscum lesions may become red and sore when the body tries to reject the virus. Sometimes a rash appears around the growths. If this rash does not improve you should be seen by a health care provider.

What is the treatment?

Two of the options for treating molluscum include:

- excising the lesions with a sharp instrument, or
- applying a chemical to the lesion so that they will eventually fall off.

Molluscum contagiosum is treatable; however, more lesions may develop even after initial treatment. Sometimes new lesions will form while existing ones are being destroyed. New growths should be treated when they become large enough to be seen, and become clinically evident.

What if I do not get treatment?

Even without treatment, most lesions will disappear within 6 months. The molluscum lesions are harmless and never run the risk of turning cancerous.



Student Health Service
Call 534-8089 for an appointment