



Molluscum Contagiosum

What is molluscum contagiosum?

Molluscum contagiosum is a common skin infection, caused by the virus molluscum contagiosum (MCV). It affects the top layer of the skin. Once a disease of children, molluscum contagiosum is now seen as a sexually transmitted disease.

What does it look like?

Molluscum are usually small flesh-colored or pink bumps. They may appear shiny and have a small indentation in the center. Sometimes they may itch. Because they can spread by skin-to-skin contact, molluscum are usually found in the areas of skin that touch each other such as the folds in the arm or the groin. In children, they are usually found on the trunk, face or arms. In adults, lesions can be found on the thighs, buttock, groin, lower abdominal region, and genital and anal areas. Persons with weakened immune systems may have more extensive outbreaks. Your health care provider is usually able to diagnose molluscum contagiosum visually.

How do you get Molluscum?

The virus is easily spread, but not harmful. It spreads from the skin of one person who has these growths to the skin of another person. It occurs most often in cases where skin-to-skin contact is frequent. Children tend to get molluscum more often than adults. Adults can spread it during sexual contact. It can also be spread via swimming pools, towels, and clothing.

How do you treat Molluscum?

Molluscum contagiosum usually goes away on its own, without leaving a scar. Whether to treat depends on many factors. For example, if a bump is near a child's eye, it may not be treated to avoid possible eye damage. Pain caused by treatment and the potential for scarring are important considerations when deciding about treatment for children.

Although it is acceptable to leave molluscum contagiosum untreated, treatment helps to prevent the spread of the virus to other parts of the body or to other people. Lesions can be removed surgically or chemically. If the bumps have been treated, it is important to keep the area clean and protected. Ask your health care provider for specific instructions.

To prevent molluscum contagiosum from spreading, try not to scratch the bumps. Put a piece of tape or bandage over any bumps. Avoid contact sports, swimming pools, and shared baths and towels.

For more information, contact the Guilford County Department of Public Health at 641-7777 or www.guilfordhealth.org