

Molluscum Contagiosum



What is Molluscum Contagiosum?

Molluscum contagiosum is an infectious skin disease transmitted from person-to-person. It is caused by the molluscum contagiosum virus, a member of the poxvirus family. Infection leads to the formation of small flat circular skin lesions, which may be flesh coloured, white, translucent or yellow. The lesions may appear anywhere on the body except the palms and soles and will not normally cause discomfort. In general, school age children and teenagers tend to experience lesions on the face, trunk, hands and feet whilst adults tend to have lesions on the lower trunk, genitalia and inner thighs.

How can spread be prevented?

- Avoid direct contact with a lesion (in adults this is often sexual contact)
- Ensure the individual has their own towels and clothing.
- Ensure contaminated items such as clothing and toys are cleaned appropriately.

How is it diagnosed?

A doctor will make the diagnosis after seeing a typical lesion. If there is doubt the lesion may be excised or sampled and examined at a laboratory. Laboratory confirmation of Molluscum contagiosum virus infection by Public Health England is made by electron microscopy.

Prevention and treatment

Infection with molluscum contagiosum virus can be prevented by avoiding direct contact with lesions or objects that may have come into contact with the lesions.

- Infected patients should be careful not to share towels with others in a household
- Keep the lesion(s) covered when taking part in P.E. or other communal sporting activities
- Scratching should be avoided as this will;
 - Enlarge the site of infection and consequently the number of lesions suffered by the patient
 - Increase the likelihood of spread of the virus to others
 - Increase the likelihood of secondary, bacterial infection of the lesion
 - Increase the likelihood of scarring.

How long will the lesions last?

In patients with a normal immune system, the lesions will resolve over time without any treatment (usually six months but possibly up to two years). The lesions will usually leave no

scarring unless they have been excessively scratched and/or bacterially infected. Some doctors may recommend piercing the spots and application of iodine. It is also possible to cauterise lesions.

Should children stay away from School?

There is no need to stay away from school, it is a self-limiting condition.