

Molluscum Contagiosum

What is molluscum contagiosum?

It is a skin infection, somewhat similar to warts, which is caused by a virus.

Who is at risk for molluscum contagiosum?

Although anyone can get molluscum contagiosum, it is more often seen in children.

What are the symptoms of molluscum contagiosum?

The symptoms include small, flesh-colored bumps on the skin, often with a tiny, hard, indented, seed-like center. Lesions commonly occur on the trunk, face and extremities. They rarely cover the entire body.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear between two and seven weeks, but may take as long as six months to appear.

How is molluscum contagiosum spread?

- Person-to-person through close contact
- Through inanimate objects such as towels

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

Unknown.

How is a person diagnosed?

The disease is usually diagnosed by the visual appearance of the bumps.

What is the treatment?

The symptoms usually go away without treatment within a few months. Alternatively, there are treatments that may be used, but there is little agreement on effective treatments. Your health care provider may recommend therapy to reduce itching and alleviate discomfort.

Does past infection make a person immune?

Unknown.

Should children or others be excluded from child care, school, work or other activities if they have molluscum contagiosum?

No. Although molluscum contagiosum bumps represent a viral infection, they are mildly contagious and most often spread to other areas of the infected child's body instead of spreading to other children. Children participating in close-contact sports, such as wrestling, should be excluded if lesions are visible and cannot be covered.

What can be done to prevent the spread of molluscum contagiosum disease?

- Wash your hands after touching the bumps.
- Do not use towels also used by an infected adult or child.
- To prevent the spread of bumps to another site, avoid scratching the bumps.
- Lesions not covered by clothing should be covered by a watertight bandage, especially when participating in contact sports or activities and while swimming. The bandage should be changed daily or when soiled.

Additional Information:

Additional information is available at www.ndhealth.gov/disease or by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180.

Resource:

American Academy of Pediatrics. [Molluscum Contagiosum]. In: Kimberlin DW, Brady MT, Jackson MA, Long SS, eds. *Red Book: 2018 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 31st ed. Itasca, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2018: 565-566