

# Molluscum Contagiosum

## What is molluscum contagiosum (MC)?

Molluscum contagiosum is a skin condition caused by a virus. It appears as bumps that are pink, yellow, or skin colored. The bumps are usually small, round and firm, and may be slightly indented in the center. They may be clustered. It is usually a mild condition, and only affects the outer lay of the skin. These bumps usually disappear on their own but may be present for up to nine months. This virus occurs worldwide and is more common in children and people with immunosuppressive conditions.

## How is molluscum contagiosum spread?

The virus is spread by direct contact with someone who has the infection, or by contact with contaminated items such as clothing, towels, and washcloths. Once someone has molluscum, they can spread it to other parts of their body by touching or scratching the bump and then touching another part of the body. Molluscum can also be spread through sexual contact.

## What is the incubation period of molluscum contagiosum?

The period between contact and appearance of the bumps can range from one week to six months.

## What is the treatment for molluscum contagiosum?

In most cases, the bumps will heal slowly without treatment. Removal of lesions can slow or stop the spread to other people or other parts of the body. Genital lesions in adults should be treated to prevent spread through sexual contact. Some treatments include cryotherapy (freezing), curettage (removing the fluid inside the bumps), lasers, or medications such as creams or pills. Discuss these treatments and their side effects with your healthcare provider.

## What can be done to prevent molluscum contagiosum?

Good personal hygiene is important to prevent the spread of this disease.

- Avoid contact with skin conditions such as bumps or blisters, whether they are yours or someone else's.
- Good hand hygiene is the best way to prevent infections, especially skin infections such as molluscum. Wash your hands often, especially after touching other people or surfaces.
- People with molluscum must keep the infected area clean and completely covered with clothing or a watertight bandage to prevent spread to themselves or others. If bandages become loose or soiled, replace with a new bandage at once. At night the bandages can be removed if there is no chance of contact with others. Replace bandages each morning.
- Do not share towels, washcloths, or clothing.
- Do not shave areas with bumps.
- Avoid sexual activities if you have bumps in your genital area. See your health care provider regarding treatment of molluscum in the genital area.

## Should children stay home from school if they have molluscum?

No. It is safe for school children to attend school when the bumps are all covered as described next. The molluscum bumps must be completely covered by clothing or an adhesive watertight bandage. Change the bandage daily or more often if they become loose or soiled.