



Molluscum Contagiosum

What is molluscum contagiosum?

Molluscum contagiosum is a common skin infection that can develop in adults and children. Molluscum contagiosum appear as small flesh-coloured bumps on the skin with a pit or dimple in the centre. They are usually painless. In adults, molluscum contagiosum most commonly causes infection in the pubic and genital area. In children the infection usually occurs on the back and chest.

How did I get molluscum contagiosum?

Molluscum contagiosum are spread by skin-to-skin contact or through contact with a surface that has the virus on it. The virus can spread:

- from one area of the body to another by scratching a bump
- from person to person through skin-to-skin contact during sex
- by touching something with the virus on it, like a towel used by another person with molluscum contagiosum

How are molluscum contagiosum diagnosed?

A health care provider will usually diagnose molluscum contagiosum by checking your skin. They may also take a small skin sample (called a biopsy) and send it to a laboratory for testing.

What is the treatment for molluscum contagiosum?

Your health care provider will talk with you about treatment options. If not treated, molluscum contagiosum will go away in healthy people, but this may take several years.

Your health care provider may recommend cryotherapy to treat the molluscum contagiosum. This treatment involves freezing the molluscum with liquid nitrogen. The number of treatments required will vary from patient to patient. Cryotherapy can be painful and can have side effects including skin irritation, swelling and blistering which can last several days. These side effects do not usually need treatment.

It is safe to have cryotherapy when you are pregnant.

Molluscum Contagiosum



How can I reduce my risk of getting molluscum contagiosum?

Molluscum contagiosum is most easily spread by skin-to-skin contact. Using condoms can reduce your risk of getting or transmitting the virus. If you notice your partner has unusual bumps in their pubic or genital area, ask them to see their health care provider.

Are there any problems from having molluscum contagiosum?

Serious problems are very rare, but the condition can cause skin irritation in the area where the bumps are. If you have a lowered immune system, you may have problems with molluscum contagiosum growing larger and becoming widespread. You may also find that you don't respond to treatment as well as other people.

Will my sexual partner(s) also get molluscum contagiosum?

If you have molluscum contagiosum it's possible that your sexual partner(s) will also have or get molluscum contagiosum. Your sexual partner(s) should see their health care provider if they notice any symptoms. You should avoid sharing towels, washcloths, razors, or other personal equipment to prevent spreading the virus.

If you need more information or have any questions, please contact the Canberra Sexual Health Clinic on (02) 5124 2184.

References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015). *Molluscum Contagiosum*.
http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/molluscum/clinical_overview.htm

Isaacs, S.N (2019). *Patient Information: Molluscum contagiosum (Beyond the Basics)*
<https://www.uptodate.com/contents/molluscum-contagiosum-beyond-the-basics>

ACCESSIBILITY

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

www.health.act.gov.au | Phone: 132281

© Australian Capital Territory, Canberra January 2021

