

Molluscum Contagiosum

Molluscum Contagiosum (mo-LUS-kum kun-tay-jee-OH-sum) is a common skin infection. It is caused by a virus. The virus spreads easily from person to person. It spreads through direct skin contact and by contact to items that an infected person has used such as towels, clothing, sports equipment, etc. Molluscum is most common in children but adults can get it as well.

Molluscum causes raised, round, flesh-colored bumps on the skin.

The bumps are usually smooth and firm with a dimple or pit in the center. In most people, they can range from about the size of a pinhead to as large as a pencil eraser (2 to 5 millimeters). Most people get about 10 to 20 bumps. A person with a weakened immune system can have a lot more bumps and they tend to be bigger.

Treatment Options

Most of the time the bumps go away on their own without treatment. For healthy people with healthy immune systems, molluscum usually disappears within 6 to 12 months without treatment and without leaving scars. Sometimes bumps may remain for up to 4 years. For people with weakened immune systems there are several options for removal of the bumps. It is important to see a Dermatologist about treatment options. Some treatments can have some unwanted side effects for a young child.

How to Prevent the Spread of Molluscum Contagiosum

- Wash your hands often
- Do not pick or scratch at the bumps.
- Cover all bumps with a watertight bandage when at school or daycare, swimming or participating in a contact sport.
- Do not share towels, washcloths, clothing, and other personal items.
- Do not shave the skin that has bumps.

Waterless alcohol-based hand cleaners are another way to clean your hands besides regular soap and water. They come as a foam or gel. Use enough to cover all surfaces of hands.

- Apply foam or gel to the palm of one hand.
- Rub onto all parts of both hands for about 10 to 15 seconds.
- Allow hands to air dry.

Note: Always use soap and water if hands look dirty, instead of alcohol hand cleaners. It is also best to use soap and water after going to the bathroom.

How long does the Molluscum Contagiosum virus stay in my body?

The virus lives only in the skin. Once the bumps are gone, the virus is gone and you cannot spread the virus to others.

