MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM

Molluscum is a common, harmless skin growth caused by a type of virus that lives on the outermost layers of the skin (epidermis).

What does it look like?
Molluscum lesions are skin colored, dome shaped and pearly in appearance. They range in size from 1-5 millimeters in diameter. They often have a central dimple. They can appear on the face, trunk, arms, legs and genitalia. They are not painful. Sometimes they itch a little. NOTE: Picking or scratching may lead to infection and/or scarring!

Is it contagious?
Yes. The virus is spread by skin to skin contact with a person who has molluscum or by touching a lesion on your own body and transferring the virus to another location on your body (autoinoculation). It is also possible to get molluscum by sharing towels or clothing with other people who have molluscum.

Incubation period
The time from infection to the appearance of lesions ranges from 1 week to 6 months.

Treatment
Although molluscum lesions may go away on their own in six to nine months, treatment is recommended to prevent auto-inoculation and to avoid infecting other people. We recommend these treatment options.

- One easy home treatment is to gently scrub the affected area with Betadine Surgical Scrub for 5 minutes daily until the lesions resolve. Betadine Surgical Scrub is available in the UHS Pharmacy without prescription. It is inappropriate for persons allergic to Betadine.
- A second home treatment option is to lightly apply Retin-A 0.025% gel to the lesions daily. This medication is only available by prescription.

*Both of the above treatments require several weeks of treatment for clearance of the infection.*
- The lesion can be treated by your clinician with liquid nitrogen which freezes the virus. Liquid nitrogen is lightly applied with a clean Q-Tip directly to the lesions. You may experience stinging and burning during treatment at the treated site. These symptoms may persist for a few minutes after treatment.
- If you prefer, we can teach you how to remove individual lesions in the privacy and convenience of your own home in three easy steps.
  1. Swab the affected skin area with an alcohol swab.
  2. Using a sterile needle, cut across the body of the molluscum lesion with the needle.
  3. Remove the contents of the papule with an alcohol swab.

What you can expect after treatment
If you treat yourself at home with a sterile needle, the lesions simply heal over by themselves in two to three days after treatment. After liquid nitrogen treatment, a blister may form at the treatment site. If this occurs, you can expect to see it slough off in two to four weeks. You should make an appointment only if you want a clinician to treat them.

Check our website: [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu) to learn more about this medical concern or others.

For an appointment: [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu) or call 510-642-2000

Clinic Nurse 510-643-7197 for advice