

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 twelve months, treatment is recommended to prevent auto-inoculation and to avoid infecting other people. We recommend these treatment options.

There are several options for treating the lesions at home:

1. topical Imiquimod 5% cream, applied to the lesions three times weekly for up to 16 weeks. This medication is only available by prescription.
2. Retin-A 0.025% gel to the lesions daily until the lesions resolve, which may take several weeks. This medication is also only available by prescription
3. Apply salicylic acid gel with a toothpick or cotton swab to the lesions three times weekly. available without a prescription

With any of the above treatments if you develop significant skin redness, irritation or pain, stop treating the lesions at home and schedule an appointment to be seen by a clinician in primary care

When treated by a clinician the treatment is usually one of the following:

1. Cryotherapy: this treatment option involves your clinician applying liquid nitrogen which freezes the virus. You may experience stinging and burning during treatment at the treated site which is usually mild. The area treated usually heals within few days to a week. And a blister often forms before the area scabs over and heals in 2-4 weeks.
2. Curettage: this treatment option involves your clinician physically removing the lesions using a small tool called a curette. You may experience stinging and brief discomfort during treatment at the treated site, which typically resolves soon after treatment. The area treated usually heals within a few days to a week.

Because molluscum can be easily spread to other areas, it is important that you **do not shave** pubic hair until the lesions have resolved.

For an appointment visit www.uhs.berkeley.edu or call **510-642-2000**
Clinic Nurse **510-643-7197** for advice