

MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM



Molluscum Contagiosum is a **benign** viral skin infection that causes raised pearl like blisters or sores on the skin. It is caused by coming directly in contact with a lesion on the face, neck, hands, arms, armpit, or anywhere else on the body except for palms and soles. It is a common infection in children and can spread through contact with contaminated objects such as towels, clothes, or toys.

The virus can also spread by sexual contact. In adults, lesions are commonly seen on the genitals, abdomen, and inner thigh. Lesions on the genitalia are commonly mistaken for herpes or warts. However, these lesions are painless. ***Please note that this is not a sexually transmitted disease among children. It is only sexually transmitted between sexually active adults.***

SYMPTOMS:

The lesion of molluscum typically begins as a small, painless papule that gradually may take on a raised, wart-like appearance of a nodule. The papule will usually have a dimple in the center. Papules occur in lines where the person has scratched and irritated the skin. This will cause the virus to spread in a line or groups, called crops. Papules tend to be two to five millimeters wide and don't show signs of redness or inflammation unless you have been digging or scratching the lesion. The skin lesion has a central core of white, cheesy, waxy material.

DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT:

Diagnosis is based on the appearance of the lesion. It can be confirmed by a skin biopsy. People with normal immune systems can usually go untreated as the disorder will go away on its own over a period of months to years. Individual lesions can be removed surgically by scraping, de-coring, and freezing or through needle electrosurgery. Surgical removal of lesions may result in scarring. Medications may be more helpful in removing lesions however it can cause blistering and lead to temporary skin discoloration. Tretinoin cream is normally the initial topical cream prescribed. It can cause local skin irritation but works well on small lesions. Cantharidin, commonly known as beetle juice, is another common solution used to treat lesions that have not responded to Tretinoin. Cantharidin is applied by the doctor and is left on for 1-2 hours. It is known to cause visible blisters that heal over 1-2 weeks generally taking the virus away.

PROGNOSIS:

Lesions of Molluscum Contagiosum may persist from a few months to a few years. These lesions will disappear without scarring eventually, however excessive scratching will leave marks. Individual lesions usually disappear without 2-3 months while the complete disappearance of all lesions occurs within 6-18 months. This condition may persist in people with a weakened immune system. Patients with eczema or other disruptions to the normal skin barrier may experience recurring lesions.

PREVENTION:

Avoid direct contact with skin lesions. Do not share towels with other people. Also, avoid having young children bathe together if any lesions are present. Although the condition is contagious, it does not restrict children from partaking in their normal activities and school. In adults, avoiding sex can also prevent the Molluscum virus and other STDs. You can also avoid this condition by having a monogamous sexual relationship with a partner known to be disease free.

There are many ways to treat Molluscum Contagiosum. Please don't hesitate to ask Dr. Shah & her colleagues about the best treatment for you or your child.