

Molluscum Contagiosum

Definition

- Molluscum are small raised growths that have a smooth, waxy surface
- Viral infection of the skin

Health Information

Symptoms

- Small bumps with a waxy or pearl-colored, smooth surface
- May have a dimple (indent) in center
- Bumps are firm with a core of white material.
- Are many different sizes, from pinhead to 1/4 inch (3 to 6 mm) across
- Can occur anywhere on the body, but usually stay in just one area
- Are sometimes itchy, but not painful
- Usually age 2 to 12 years
- Most infected children get 5 to 10 molluscum

Cause

- Molluscum is caused by a poxvirus. This is a different virus than the one that causes warts.
- Friction or picking at them causes them to increase in number.

To Treat or Not to Treat?

- Some doctors advise not treating molluscum if there are only a few. Reason: Molluscum are harmless, painless, and have a natural tendency to heal and disappear.
- Special treatment of molluscum is considered for the reasons below:
- Your child picks at them
- They are in areas of friction (for example, the armpit)
- They are spreading rapidly OR
- You feel they are a cosmetic problem

Prevention of Spread to Others

- Avoid baths or hot tubs with other children. Reason: Molluscum can spread in warm water.
- Also, avoid sharing washcloths or towels.
- Contact sports: Molluscum can spread to other team members. Molluscum should be covered or treated.
- Time it takes to get them: 4 to 8 weeks after close contact

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Molluscum are harmless and painless.
- Wart-removing acids are not helpful.
- Duct tape treatment will make them go away faster.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. **Duct Tape - Cover the Molluscum:**

- Covering molluscum with duct tape can irritate them. This turns on the body's immune system.
- Cover as many of the molluscum as possible. (Cover at least 3 of them.)
- The covered molluscum become red and start to die. When this happens, often ALL molluscum will go away.
- Try to keep the molluscum covered all the time.
- Remove the tape once per day, usually before bathing. Then replace it after bathing.
- Some children don't like the tape on at school. At the very least, tape it every night.

3. **Prevention of Spread to Other Areas of Your Child's Body:**

- Discourage your child from picking at the molluscum.
- Picking it and scratching a new area with the same finger can spread molluscum. A new molluscum can form in 1 to 2 months.
- Chewing or sucking on them can lead to similar bumps on the face.
- If your child is doing this, cover the molluscum with a Band-Aid.
- Keep your child's fingernails cut short and wash your child's hands more often.

4. **What to Expect:**

- Without treatment, molluscum go away in 6 to 18 months.
- If covered with duct tape, they may go away in 2 or 3 months.
- If picked at often, molluscum can become infected with bacteria. If this happens, they change into crusty sores (impetigo).

5. **Return to School:**

- Your child doesn't have to miss any child care or school.
- There is a mild risk of spread to others.

Call Your Doctor If

- Your child continues to pick at the molluscum
- New molluscum develop after 2 weeks of treatment
- Molluscum are still present after 12 weeks of treatment
- You think your child needs to be seen

Pediatric Care Advice

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