

Molluscum Contagiosum

Molluscum is a skin infection with a virus that causes flesh-colored, dome-shaped spots on the skin. The center of the older spots may be indented and may collect a tiny bit of white debris.

- The infection is localized to the skin and does not cause illness in healthy children
- About 5% of children will get molluscum at some point in time
- Molluscum is especially common in children with eczema
- Most children get 2-20 spots although some children will have more

Molluscum is a contagious infection, spread by skin-to-skin contact. It is common for the infection to spread on the individual, either in a local cluster or to other areas of the body, by touching. Molluscum can also be spread from person to person by sports or on objects such as towels.

The usual incubation period for molluscum is 2-7 weeks but can be as long as 6 months. Animals are not infected with molluscum.

Molluscum spots last for months. They eventually disappear on their own. They are not dangerous and do not scar if left to heal on their own.

Treatment is primarily for cosmetic reasons and is therefore optional. Molluscum can be treated with creams to irritate the spots and get the immune system to recognize and eliminate the viruses. The spots may also be treated by scraping them, usually requiring anesthetic. All of these treatments have variable success; they do not always work and may irritate or scar the skin.

Exclusion from activities is not necessary for children who have molluscum, since it is not harmful and may be quite long lasting. It may be better to avoid bathing siblings together to decrease the chance of transmission, but simply living in the same household may spread the virus even without co-bathing.

6/07, 2/08, 3/11, 11/13, 11/15