

Molluscum Contagiosum

This is a common skin infection caused by the molluscipoxvirus.

The virus causes small, usually 2-5mm, painless, pink or pearly white lumps on the skin. The top of the lump is indented and contains a white core. The infection is not serious, only affects the skin, and will disappear without treatment although this may take several months. Individual lumps often disappear after about two months, but often there will be more than one lump and they will not all disappear until six to nine months. There are no long-term ill effects following molluscum contagiosum. People who are immune suppressed may have more lesions and these may take longer to clear up.

Diagnosis is made by clinical examination and confirmed by microscopic examination of the core of the lump.

The virus is transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact where there are minor breaks in the skin and is most common in children. The virus can also be transmitted sexually when it affects the genital area.

Control of spread

- > Exclusion from child care, preschool, school or work is not necessary.
- > Direct contact with lumps should be avoided.
- > Covering lumps is not necessary.
- > Do not share towels.

Incubation period

(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)

2 – 7 weeks, sometimes longer.

Infectious period

(time during which an infected person can infect others)

As long as the lumps are present. This may be for several months.

Treatment

Lumps will disappear without treatment, although this may take several months. Various treatments such as laser therapy, freezing and surgery are occasionally used for cosmetic reasons.