



## What is Molluscum Contagiosum?

Molluscum contagiosum is a skin condition caused by a pox virus. Molluscum contagiosum lesions (Mollusca) can appear anywhere on the body including the face, neck, arms, legs, abdomen, and genital area, alone or in groups. Mollusca are small round bumps that are pink, white or skin colored with a dimple or indentation in the center. They may become itchy, sore, red, and/or swollen. It is usually a mild condition, and only affects the top layer of skin and does not circulate throughout the body; therefore, it cannot spread through coughing or sneezing. Since the virus lives only on the top layer of skin, once the Mollusca are gone the virus is gone and you cannot spread it to others. Molluscum contagiosum occurs worldwide, and is more common in children and people with immunosuppressive conditions.

## How do you get Molluscum Contagiosum?

Molluscum contagiosum spreads from direct person-to-person physical contact and through virus contaminated objects such as clothing, towels, bed linen, bathing sponges, pool equipment and toys. Someone with Molluscum can spread it to other parts of their body by touching or scratching a Mollusca and touching their body somewhere else. Shaving and electrolysis can also spread Mollusca to other parts of the body. Mollusca can spread from one person to another through sexual contact. Many cases of molluscum in adults are caused by sexual contact.

## What is the treatment for Molluscum Contagiosum?

In most cases, Mollusca will heal slowly without treatment. Removal of the bumps can slow or stop the spread to other people or other parts of the body. Mollusca in adults should be treated in order to prevent spread through sexual contact. Some treatments include cryotherapy (freezing), curettage (removing the fluid inside the bumps), lasers, or medications such as creams or pills. Discuss these treatments and their side effects with your healthcare provider.

## What can you do to prevent Molluscum Contagiosum?

The best way to avoid getting molluscum is by following good hygiene (cleanliness) habits:

- Hand washing removes germs that may have been picked up from other people or from surfaces that have germs on them.
- Don't pick or scratch at Mollusca bumps as it can spread the virus to other parts of the body and makes it easier to spread the disease to others.
- Keep the Mollusca clean and dry and covered with clothing or a bandage. Uncover the Mollusca to help keep your skin healthy anytime there is no risk of others coming in contact with your skin.
- Do not share towels, clothing, bar soap, razors, hair brushes or other personal items.
- People with Mollusca should not take part in contact sports like wrestling, basketball, and football unless the bumps can be covered by clothing or bandages. Swimming should be avoided unless **all** Mollusca can be covered by watertight bandages.
- Do not shave or have electrolysis on areas with Mollusca.
- Avoid sexual activities if you have Mollusca on your genitals until you can see a health care provider.

## What are the long-term effects?

Recovery from one molluscum infection doesn't prevent future infections. Molluscum contagiosum is not like herpes virus which can remain dormant ("sleeping") in your body for long periods of time and then reappear. If you get new Mollusca after you are cured, it means you have come in contact with an infected person or object again.

Jackson County Health Department  
1715 Lansing Ave., Suite 221  
Jackson, MI 49202 (517) 788-4420  
[www.co.jackson.mi.us/hd/](http://www.co.jackson.mi.us/hd/)  
Source: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
CDC Public Information  
English 1-888-246-2675  
Español 1-888-246-2857  
TTY 1-888-874-2646