

MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM

WHAT IS MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM?

Molluscum contagiosum is a skin infection caused by one of the pox viruses.

HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED?

The molluscum contagiosum virus (MC) is spread both sexually and non-sexually through skin-to-skin contact. The infection mostly affects children, sexually active adults and people whose immune system is not working well.

WHAT DOES THE INFECTION LOOK LIKE?

Molluscum contagiosum usually appears as painless firm, round, flesh-coloured papules or lumps that have a dimple in the middle. They often disappear within a year if they are untreated. If they are scratched or injured they can spread to surrounding skin.

The lesions can take several weeks to grow and whereas in children they can be anywhere on the body, in adults, they usually occur on the thighs, groin, buttocks, lower abdomen and the genital area.

HOW LONG DO THE LUMPS TAKE TO DEVELOP?

From the time of infection, it takes an average of 2-3 months for the mollusca to appear but this may vary from as little as one week to as long as 6 months. Some people never get any lesions at all. They usually clear up by themselves but people often get recurrences.

HOW IS MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM DIAGNOSED?

Molluscum contagiosum is most often diagnosed from the clinical appearance of the papules.

HOW IS MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM TREATED?

Although the mollusca usually disappear on their own, many patients prefer to be treated. At the MSHC we usually freeze them using liquid nitrogen or apply imiquimod (Aldara) cream.

This fact sheet is designed to provide you with information on Molluscum contagiosum. It is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor. All clients are strongly advised to check with their doctor about any specific questions or concerns they may have. Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this pamphlet is correct at the time of printing.