

MOLLUSCUM

Definition

Molluscum contagiosum is caused by a virus and usually causes a mild skin disease. The virus affects only the outer (epithelial) layer of skin, particularly in sensitive skin areas, including areas with eczema. They resemble pimples with a waxy, pinkish look and a small central pit. They are usually painless, but maybe itchy or become infected. Molluscum are very contagious and are spread by direct physical contact.

Natural History

In healthy people the molluscum go away eventually once the body becomes immune to them. This may take 6-8 weeks for each molluscum lesion. However, with continuous spreading new lesions will continue to appear over time, the average duration is 6-12 months, with some infections lasting up to 4-5 years. Scarring may occur in some individuals, particularly if the lesions become infected.

Preventing Spread

The best way to avoid getting molluscum or preventing spread to other parts of your body or other individuals is good hygiene:

- Do not touch, pick or scratch any skin with molluscum
- Ensure you wash your hands frequently with soap, vigorously for 15-30 seconds.
- Keep the molluscum covered with clothing or bandages
- Do not share clothing, towels or other personal items.

Your child does not need to stay home from daycare or school if they have molluscum.

Treatment

As mentioned above, molluscum will eventually go away on their own, and most people do not need any further treatment.

But given the long time to resolve, some people may choose to explore treatment, particularly if the molluscum occurs on the face. If you wish to explore treatment options, your doctor can refer you to a dermatologist (skin specialist). The dermatologist can talk to you about creams, medications, cyrotherapy (freezing) and/or laser therapy.