

Molluscum contagiosum



Molluscum contagiosum is a common skin infection caused by the molluscipoxvirus.

How molluscum contagiosum is spread

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.

Signs and symptoms

The virus causes small, usually 2 to 5 mm, 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, as it only affects the skin and will disappear without treatment although this may take several months. Individual lumps often disappear after about 2 months, but often there will be more than one lump and they will not all disappear until 6 to 9 months have passed.

There are no long-term ill effects following molluscum contagiosum. People who are immune suppressed may have more lesions (lumps) and these may take longer to clear up.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is made by examination of the skin and can be confirmed by microscopic examination of the core of the lump, but this is not usually necessary.

Incubation period

(time between becoming infected and developing symptoms)

2 to 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. Cryotherapy (freezing) may occasionally be used for cosmetic reasons.

Prevention

- > Exclusion from childcare, preschool, school or work is not necessary.
- > Avoid direct contact with lumps.
- > Wash hands after any contact with the lumps.
- > Covering lumps is not necessary.
- > Do not share towels.

Useful links

- > SA Health: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au
 - Exclusion from childcare, preschool, school and work
 - Hand hygiene.

You've Got What? 5th Edition

Communicable Disease Control Branch

Telephone: 1300 232 272

Email: HealthCommunicableDiseases@sa.gov.au

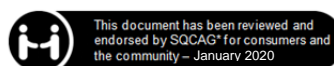
The SA Health Disclaimer for this resource is located at

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/youvegotwhat

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This document has been reviewed and endorsed by SQCAG* for consumers and the community – January 2020

*SA Health Safety and Quality Community Advisory Group.



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