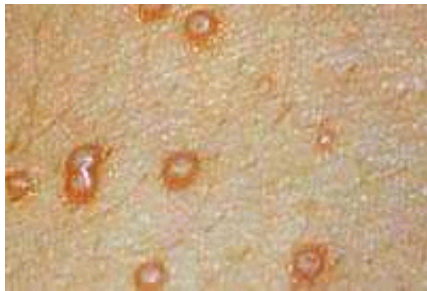


What are Molluscum Contagiosum?

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Molluscum contagiosum is a large name for an essentially benign viral infection of the skin that causes small skin-colored lumps or bumps. While there are many different causes for lumps and bumps of the skin, molluscum also tend to have a small indentation or crater in their center - not always obvious to the untrained eye!! Molluscum are caused by a DNA poxvirus, of which there are three types (MCV I, MCV II, MCV III). While the presence of molluscum is a frequent aesthetic concern, they are harmless and painless. To sum up, molluscum are a variety of wart that may spread and multiply rapidly.



Molluscum Internet photo

According to the Merck Manual of diagnosis and therapy, molluscum contagiosum are a pox **virus** infection characterized by skin colored, smooth, waxy, umbilicated papules 2 to 10 mm in diameter. (seventeenth edition, 1999).

How is it spread?

Molluscum can be spread sexually or through non-sexual contact. It is passed on by **direct skin to skin contact** with the molluscum growths on someone else's body. An infected person can also transmit it to others on their fingers, after touching the growths on their own body. They are not necessarily sexually-transmitted, and can be found on the hands, buttocks, abdomen and face in addition to the obvious genital regions.

It is important to avoid manipulating or toying with these lesions, as they can become infected - or worse, may multiply from auto-contamination (you spread them from one place to another on yourself). Health care professionals advise you - **do not shave infected skin!** Shaving infected areas increases your risk of spread and auto-contamination, in addition to increasing your risk of the lesions becoming infected.

What is the incubation period?

According to the Merck Manual of diagnosis and therapy, Molluscum growths can appear anywhere from one week to six months after contact.

What to do if I suspect that I have Molluscum?

Contact a health care professional for assessment. A physician can diagnose the lesion by looking at the growths.

_____Although there is no cure for molluscum, the growths can be treated and removed. These growths are not dangerous and they sometimes disappear on their own.

Options for treatment?

_____The elimination of molluscum is accomplished by the destruction of the lesion. According to the Merck Manual, this can be done by:

- freezing the growths with liquid nitrogen (cryotherapy). Liquid nitrogen burns the wart lesion and is quite successful in eradicating the molluscum.
- removing the central core of the papule with a needle
- removing the central core of the papule with the tip of a scalpel blade to remove **just** the infected skin. Curettage is quick and relatively well-tolerated.
- burning them off with a potent acid (trichloroacetic acid).

NOTE: Like all forms of warts, molluscum will disappear spontaneously. Most of these warts will clear spontaneously in 6 to 8 months; however, they may last much longer...and this is a long time to be infectious!

If you believe you might be infected with molluscum, call the Mt A Health Centre at 364-2163 to book an appointment for an assessment.

Whether it be molluscum or any other sexually transmitted disease.....Prevention is key.

Using a barrier such as condoms (male or female) every time you have sex will greatly reduce your chances of getting molluscum and other sexually transmitted diseases. However, if your partner has molluscum growths on an area not protected by the condom, you may still be at risk for getting molluscum.

Resources:

The Merck Manual, seventeenth Edition, 1999, page 811.

<http://www.womenshealthmatters.ca/centres/sex/infections/molluscum.html>

<http://cliniquelactuel.com/home/page/std/molluscum>

<http://www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile08i.stm>

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact the Health Services at Mount Allison University at 364-2163 to meet with the Nurse/Educator.

