

Molluscum Contagiosum

FACTSHEET

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What is Molluscum Contagiosum?

Molluscum contagiosum is a skin infection caused by a virus that can affect any part of the body. Lesions (bump) commonly can occur on the trunk, face, arms and legs.

Who gets Molluscum Contagiosum?

Anyone can get Molluscum contagiosum. The disease is more often seen in children. Individuals who are immunocompromised may develop an increase number of lesions than normally seen.

What are the symptoms Molluscum Contagiosum?

A person with molluscum contagiosum has a smooth, firm, circular lesion on the skin. The lesion may be flesh colored, white, translucent or yellow in color. Lesions appearing in adults are most often seen on the lower abdomen, pubic area, genital area or inner thighs. Lesions appearing in children are most often on the face, trunk, and extremities. In some people the lesions itch.

How is Molluscum Contagiosum spread?

Molluscum contagiosum is spread from one person to another by direct contact. It can be spread sexually or nonsexually. It is suspected that an infected person can spread the viral infection from one body part to another by scratching the lesions. When this occurs it is called autoinoculation. Spread has also occurred by sharing items such as towels.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms can appear from 7 days to six months after infection but usually in 2 to 7 weeks.

Is a person with Molluscum Contagiosum contagious?

Yes. The length of time a person is contagious is unknown. It is believed that as long as a person has lesions they can spread the disease to someone else.

How is Molluscum Contagiosum treated?

Molluscum contagiosum can resolve spontaneously or be treated by removing the lesions. This can be done in a variety of ways.

Should a person with Molluscum Contagiosum be excluded from work or school?

No, it is not necessary to exclude a person with this disease from work or school. However, children with visible lesions should be excluded from close contact sports such as wrestling

Want more information?

Additional information can be provided to you by your health care provider. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call 202-442-5842.

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