

## Molluscum Contagiosum

### What is molluscum contagiosum?

Molluscum Contagiosum is a mild skin disease caused by a poxvirus that normally affects the outer layer of the skin. The lesions are also known as Mollusca.

### What are the symptoms?

Molluscum appear as skin lesions that are usually small pink, white, or flesh-colored bumps with a small, hard dimple in the center. They are usually painless but they may become red, swollen, itchy, and sore. On average, the lesions are about 2 to 5 mm in size. In healthy individuals, lesions can be self-limiting and resolve without treatment within 6 to 12 months though some may take as long as 4 years to resolve.

### How long does this disease last?

The bumps generally disappear within six to 12 months.

### How is molluscum contagiosum spread?

Molluscum contagiosum is only mildly contagious and is more often spread to other areas of the affected child's body rather than to other children. However, they can be spread via person-to-person close contact, and via fomite transmission via sharing of inanimate objects such as toys, clothing, or towels

### Who is at risk for molluscum contagiosum infection?

Molluscum contagiosum is most common in children one to ten years of age. Others at increased risk for getting the disease include:

- Individuals with weakened immune systems (such as individuals with HIV or individuals being treated for cancer).
- Individuals with atopic dermatitis may also be a risk factor for getting molluscum contagiosum due to frequent breaks in the skin.
- Individuals who live in warm, humid climates where living conditions are crowded.

### What preventive measures and treatments are available?

Molluscum is not a vaccine preventable disease. Prevention should involve:

- Appropriate hand hygiene,
- Teaching individuals to avoid scratching, touching, or picking at the rash, which can spread infection to other parts of the body,
- Covering the rash with cloth or watertight bandage,
- Discouraging sharing of personal items (such as towels, goggles and swimsuits).



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### What should schools do?

Identify lesions on the skin, inform the individual and parents and request a doctor's note because only a healthcare professional can diagnose molluscum contagiosum.

### What are recommendations for exclusion?

No exclusion is necessary but individuals with molluscum should not participate in contact sports (wrestling, basketball, and football) unless all parts of the rash can be covered by clothing or bandages. Activities that use shared gear such as helmets, baseball gloves, and balls should be avoided unless all parts of the can be covered. Swimming should be avoided unless all growths can be covered by watertight bandages. Other items and equipment (such as kick boards and water toys) should be used only when all parts of the rash are covered by clothing or watertight bandage.

