

GENITAL MOLLUSCUM



What is Molluscum?

Molluscum contagiosum is an infection of the skin caused by a virus. It is common and occurs mostly in children. Adults that have been infected as children are generally immune.

Sexually transmitted molluscum lesions affect the genitals, pubic region, lower abdomen, upper thighs and/or buttocks.

How can Molluscum be caught?

The virus is spread from skin to skin contact and from scratching the bumps and then touching normal skin.

Handling objects such as towels can also spread the virus. The spots come up after an incubation period of a few weeks.

It can be caught from another person by direct contact and this includes sexual contact. Most people with the condition are perfectly healthy.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The rash consists of groups of smooth pearly dome shaped bumps, from 2-5mm in diameter with a depression in the centre.

It is generally not painful but can be itchy.

Some people may mistake them for genital warts.

General Advice

It is a good idea to avoid shaving or waxing the genital area when you have molluscum infection as this can cause further spread. It is also a good idea not to squeeze the spots as this may also cause them to spread further.

Don't share towels, clothes or bed linen while you have the infection.

It is recommended that you get tests for other STIs if you have genital Molluscum infection.

How is molluscum treated?

Most cases are self-limiting which means they will go away without treatment. This may take 6-18 months. Treatment can be recommended if there is bleeding, bacterial infection, itch, lesion persistence and concerns regarding onward transmission and auto-inoculation

Treatment can include freezing with liquid nitrogen or self-application of a prescribed treatment such as podophylotoxin.

Following treatment, the virus does not persist in the body.

Safer Sex

Condoms may reduce transmission of molluscum infection slightly but as the lesions are usually in the groin or pubic area which are not covered by the condom they do not protect you completely.

Condoms do protect you against other sexually transmitted infections like gonorrhoea, chlamydia, HIV and syphilis. Condoms are available free of charge from all sexual health services and many other places – just ask your local sexual health clinic.