

MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM

Molluscum contagiosum is a common skin infection that is caused by a virus. Most commonly, it affects children one to 10 years and young adults.

CAUSE A poxvirus.

SYMPTOMS

- Small, pale, shiny, domed-shaped bumps on the skin, often with a characteristic dimple on the top. The bumps may be flesh-colored, white, translucent, or pink. The bumps are usually painless, but, on rare occasions, can be itchy, red, swollen, and/or sore.
- In children, the bumps occur on the face, body, arms, or legs. It may last longer and cover more of the body in people with eczema (skin disease) or those who have a weakened immune system.

SPREAD From direct skin-to-skin contact with an infected person. It can also be spread by contact with contaminated objects such as shared clothes, towels, wash cloths, gym or pool equipment, and wrestling mats.

Persons with this skin disease can accidentally spread the virus to other parts of their body.

Spread can occur by touching or scratching the bumps and then touching another part of the body (autoinoculation). Although the virus might be spread by sharing swimming pools, baths, saunas, etc., this has not been proven. Researchers who have investigated this idea think it is more likely that the virus is spread by sharing towels and other items around a pool or sauna than through the water.

INCUBATION Typically, it takes 2 to 7 weeks from when a person is exposed/infected until symptoms develop. However, it could be up to 6 months.

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD People can spread the infection until the soft white core comes out of the center of their bump(s). After that, the bumps will begin to heal and the risk of spreading the infections will be very low. In general, contagiousness is low. Reinfection is possible but not common.

DIAGNOSIS Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider.

EXCLUSION Childcare and School: None. Encourage parents/guardians to cover bumps with clothing when there is a possibility that others will come in contact with the skin. If not covered by clothing, cover with a bandage.

Activities: Exclude any child with bumps that cannot be covered with a watertight bandage from participating in swimming or other contact sports.

TREATMENT Treatment options should be discussed with a healthcare provider.

PREVENTION/ CONTROL

- Discourage children from touching, picking, or scratching any skin with bumps or blisters.
- Have parents/guardians change bandage daily or when obviously soiled.
- Use disposable medical gloves if bandage is changed at the childcare or school.
- Discard used bandages and gloves in the trash.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after touching the bumps or discarding bandages. Thorough hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
- School sports with body contact or shared equipment:
 - Require bumps be covered with clothing or a watertight bandage.
 - DO NOT allow children to share towels, wash cloths, uniforms, clothing, or other personal items.
 - DO NOT allow sharing of sports equipment or pool equipment.
 - Provide individual kick boards and other pool equipment.
 - Clean and disinfect any surfaces and equipment thoroughly that may have been contaminated.
- For more information, See the CDC information sheet on Molluscum contagiosum at: <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/molluscum-contagiosum/>

For more information, please contact your local health department.

[Southern Nevada Health District](#) (Clark County) 775-759-1300 (24 hours)

[Northern Nevada Public Health](#) (Washoe County) 775-328-2447 (24 hours)

[Carson City Health & Human Services](#) (Carson City, Douglas, Lyon Counties) 775-887-2190 (24 hours)

[Division of Public and Behavioral Health](#) (All other Counties) 775-400-0333 (24 hours)

Email: dpbhepi@health.nv.gov