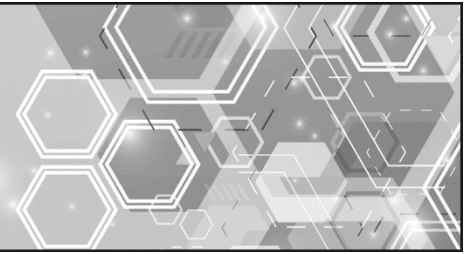




Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Molluscum Contagiosum

What is it?

Molluscum contagiosum is a skin infection that is caused by a virus. The infection causes small bumps on the skin and can occur anywhere on the body. The infection is generally mild and should not be a reason for worry; however, it is important to have any new rash or bumps checked by a health care provider.

How is it spread?

Molluscum contagiosum can be spread from person to person. This can happen if the virus on one person is touched by another person. It can also spread if someone shares personal items, such as a towel or bath sponge, with an infected individual. Molluscum are considered to be sexually transmitted when the lesions are found on the abdomen, groin, external genitals, buttocks, or inner thighs.

What do I look for?

Molluscum contagiosum appears as small bumps (2-5 mm in diameter) with a dimple in the center; initially firm, flesh-coloured or pink, and pearl or dome-shaped. After the bumps have been present for a period of time, they may soften and turn gray. At this stage, the centre of the bumps usually appears as a white, cheesy or waxy material which may drain out. There may be one or many bumps, which can occasionally be itchy. Sometimes the bumps will become red and inflamed.

How is it treated?

Healthy people are usually able to fight the virus and the bumps usually go away over a period of 6-12 months with no treatment. In those with a weakened immune system, the bumps may be more severe, or persist for a longer amount of time. Molluscum contagiosum can be treated by targeting the bumps when they appear. This may be done by freezing the bumps, the same method that is typically used to treat warts.

How can I protect myself?

It is important to avoid touching or scratching the bumps, and to keep them covered to prevent spreading the infection to other areas on the body. Condoms and dental dams can be used to protect against exposure but may not provide full protection as they do not always cover the bumps completely. It is important to discuss the potential risk of infection with sexual partners. Infected persons should avoid sharing personal items such as towels and razors. The most common complication is an infection at the site around the bumps, most often caused by scratching.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

