

Molluscum Contagiosum

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are being provided with this fact sheet:

- because you or your child may have been exposed to Molluscum contagiosum.** If you believe your child has Molluscum contagiosum, contact your medical provider. Notify your child care provider, school, or preschool immediately after the diagnosis has been made.

 - for informational purposes only.**
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What is molluscum contagiosum?

Molluscum contagiosum is a common skin infection caused by a virus that infects the top layer of skin. Humans are the only known source of this virus.

What are the symptoms of molluscum contagiosum?

Symptoms of illness appear 2 weeks to 6 months after an individual is exposed to the virus. The growth of small lesions on the skin is the primary symptom of molluscum contagiosum. The lesions are usually flesh-colored, white, yellow, or clear, with a dimple in the center. Lesions in children often occur on the face, trunk, and limbs. In adults, lesions most often occur on the lower abdomen, genitals, and inner thighs. The lesions are usually painless, but sometimes they can itch and become inflamed.

How is molluscum contagiosum spread?

The virus is spread by skin-to-skin contact with someone who has these lesions. It can also be spread by sharing personal items such as towels and blankets.

Who is at risk for molluscum contagiosum?

It is possible for any person to get the virus. People who commonly have more direct skin contact with others (such as children in schools or child cares) may be at an increased risk of getting the virus.

How is molluscum contagiosum diagnosed?

Generally a diagnosis is made clinically by looking at the lesions. It can also be diagnosed through microscopic examination and a skin biopsy.

How is Molluscum contagiosum treated?

The lesions are usually self-limiting and will disappear without scarring. Any one lesion may last 2 to 3 months. Complete disappearance of all lesions generally occurs within 6 to 18 months, but can take up to 4 years. Children with scattered lesions, or a single lesion, need not be treated. Persons with many lesions can have the lesions physically removed by a doctor,

How is the spread of molluscum contagiosum reduced?

- Avoid direct skin contact with someone who has the virus
- Avoid the sharing of personal items such as towels and clothing
- Practice good handwashing
- Prevent children from scratching or picking at the lesions
- Keep molluscum lesions clean, dry, and covered with clothing or a bandage whenever possible

Child Care Health Program

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Adapted from the Snohomish Health District

Exclude from group setting?

Children with this illness do not need to be excluded from school or child care.

Reference:

American Academy of Pediatrics

- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools pages 121-122

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