



Molluscum Contagiosum

What causes molluscum?

Molluscum are smooth, pearly, skin-colored skin growths caused by a pox virus. They begin as small bumps and may grow as large as a pencil eraser. Many have a central pit where the viral bodies are located. Molluscum can be itchy and the skin around the growths may become red and irritated and appear to be infected. The bumps usually last from two weeks to one and a half years. They will eventually resolve, even without treatment. The molluscum may be passed from child to child by direct contact. Molluscum in the genital area may be spread by sexual contact.

Please review the options below. We try when possible to let you choose which option is best to try each visit because you know your child best.

Methods of treatment:

Although molluscum will eventually resolve, lesions spread easily and may become irritated, itchy, or cosmetically objectionable. For these reasons they are often removed. The treatment depends on the age of the patient and the size and location of the growths.

Non-painful options:

- Aldara is a topical cream (not FDA approved for molluscum) which is frequently used. It is painless but may produce some irritation. It boosts the immune system in the local area to help eradicate the virus.
- Topical Retin-A may be applied daily to lesions. The goal is to create enough irritation that the lesions resolve.

Painful options:

- Cantharone, a blistering agent made from beetles, is applied with a wooden applicator to the skin growth. A small blister usually forms in a few hours; the Cantharone is then washed off. When the scab falls off, the growth is gone. Advantages include that application is painless in most patients. Disadvantages are that the amount of blistering is not predictable and the medication cannot be used in skin folds (and usually not on the face). Occasionally no blistering occurs. Sometimes, the child is quite sensitive and extensive blistering is seen. Although the blisters are uncomfortable, they are very superficial and usually resolve within a few days. Compresses with lukewarm water and breaking the blisters with a sterile needle may help. We recommend keeping an antibiotic ointment on the areas until completely healed. Scarring is rare, usually only occurring if the treated areas become infected or are picked.
- Curettage removes molluscum by scraping the bump off with a sharp instrument. There will be some slight bleeding with this procedure.

- Freezing with liquid nitrogen is another form of treatment. It feels hot/painful for a moment, and then may form a blister or irritation at the site.

Non-treatment options:

- Another option is not treating - Molluscum will eventually resolve on their own. Once this happens, most people will have a life-long immunity to reinfection. Disadvantages of this method include: 1) lesions may be spread to other people, 2) facial lesions may cause eye irritation, 3) some people (especially those with allergies, asthma, atopic eczema, or immune deficiencies) may have extensive infection with hundreds of lesions.

Discomfort from any method of treatment is usually eased by acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol, Tempra).

For Questions or Emergency Care:

Call the office at **601-815-3374**. You may need to speak with the doctor on-call.