

Molluscum Contagiosum Infection

This skin condition is caused by a virus in the pox family. It is acquired through direct contact and does not spread systemically. It often occurs in young children, but has been seen more frequently in adults over the last 30 years or so.

In adults, the virus is typically spread through sexual contact, although this is not always the case.

The disease is not particularly severe or dangerous, so other than in very young children, treatment is usually not very aggressive. Over time, the infected person may well develop an immunity to the virus and the lesions will clear up on their own without leaving any scars. Typically, the infection runs its course in about 2 years.

Like with many viruses, treatment options are limited. Generally, a dermatologist will focus on destroying lesions either by removing them with a curet, freezing them with liquid nitrogen, or with a topical medication called Cantharidin, which causes superficial blisters to form, after which the lesions dry up and peel away.

Occasionally a molluscum contagiosum lesion will develop a secondary infection. The lesions also can grow quite large and spread over the body. In some cases, dermatitis develops in the affected area, and it is difficult to clear this up until the lesions are removed.

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