

## MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM

### What is it?

Molluscum Contagiosum is a benign viral skin infection. It causes normal skin to grow into bumps and is not particularly harmful or painful. Hundreds of thousands of cases of this virus are diagnosed every year.

### What are the symptoms?

It produces small, waxy, round, raised little growths (often with a tiny depression in the middle) which may be single at first, 2-5mm across, but can multiply into clusters. They contain a firm white substance rather than pus and the blisters can range in colour - clear, flesh coloured, pink, white or yellow. Other symptoms include itching and red scaly skin around the blisters. The blisters occur wherever the virus enters the body, usually on abdomen, face, thighs or genitals.

### Is it infectious?

**Yes. It has a worldwide distribution and is most frequently seen in children. It can be spread by**

- Direct skin to skin contact with infected skin
- Manual contact such as sharing towels etc.
- Scratching, picking or breaking the blisters
- Touching one another especially in children

### What is the incubation period?

The time taken from contact with the virus to actual signs and symptoms is variable but usually between 3 to 12 weeks. A person will probably remain infectious as long as the lesions are present.

### How do I know I have it?

Diagnosis is based upon the appearance of the skin lesions.

### Is there any treatment?

No. It resolves itself spontaneously after 6-24 months. Although the virus remains in the body, the immune system of a healthy person can usually control the outbreaks, causing the blisters to disappear.

### How soon can the person/child return to work/school?

There is no reason to stay away from work/school. A person can take part in most activities, including swimming, but it may be wise to avoid close contact and keep the area covered by clothing.

