

# Molluscum Contagiosum

## Definition

Molluscum are small, raised growths that have a smooth, waxy surface. They are caused by a poxvirus, a different virus than the one that causes warts. They are somewhat contagious, and children often contract them from other children or from exposure to the virus in swimming pools.

## Symptoms

- Small (pinhead to ¼ inch) firm smooth bumps with a white core that are waxy or pearl-colored and may have a dimple in center
- Can occur anywhere on the body, but usually stay in just one area
- Are sometimes itchy, but not painful
- Usually occur between the ages of 2 to 12 years
- Most infected children get 5 to 10 molluscum
- Friction or picking at them causes them to increase in number.



<https://www.hopkinsallchildrens.org/Patients-Families/Health-Library/HealthDocNew/Molluscum-Contagiosum>

## To Treat or Not to Treat?

Treating molluscum is not necessary because they are harmless, painless, and have a natural tendency to heal and disappear on their own within months or up to as long as 2 years. Reasons treatment might be recommended include:

- Your child picks at them and they are spreading
- They are in areas of friction like the armpit or inner thighs
- They are spreading rapidly
- You feel they are a cosmetic problem

### Treatment options to speed recovery include:

1. Duct tape cover method
  - Covering molluscum with duct tape can irritate them which turns on the body's immune system to help eliminate them more quickly.
  - Cover as many of the molluscum as possible (at least 3). The covered molluscum become red and start to die. When this happens, often ALL molluscum will go away.
  - Try to keep the molluscum covered all the time aside from bathing. If your child doesn't like wearing the tape at school, make sure to apply the tape at night.
  - This method takes 2-3 months
2. Tape stripping
  - This is a method often recommended by dermatologists that should be fairly painless.
  - Buy a silk-backed surgical tape (such as Durapore) and tape on the lesions every night before bed. Then, gently remove the tape in the morning.
  - This method takes 2-3 weeks
3. Differin Gel (adapalene 0.1%)
  - Safe for use in kids 5 years and older
  - Apply a thin layer to the molluscum 1 to 3 times/day. It will cause skin irritation which turns on the body's immune system to help eliminate them more quickly. If too much irritation, use less often or stop use.
  - This medication causes sun sensitivity; be sure to use sunscreen if the treated area is exposed to sun.
4. Referral to a Dermatologist
  - Dermatologists have great tricks to help eliminate molluscum more quickly.
  - They may recommend a freezing medication, a peeling medication, or a blistering treatment

### Prevention of Spread:

- Discourage scratching, picking, or chewing/sucking because this can spread molluscum to spread. New lesions develop in 1-2 months
- Avoid baths or hot tubs with other children. Reason: Molluscum can spread in warm water.
- Also, avoid sharing washcloths or towels.
- Keep covered if in contact sports to prevent spread to other team members. It can take 4 to 8 weeks for a close contact to develop molluscum
- If picked often, molluscum can become infected with bacteria. If this happens, they change into crusty sores (impetigo).

### Return to School:

- Your child doesn't have to miss any childcare or school.
- If participating in contact sports, and the molluscum are not covered by clothing, cover with a bandaid.