



MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM

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Molluscum contagiosum is a viral disorder of the skin most commonly seen in children. Lesions can be single or multiple and are usually flesh colored, dome-shaped bumps with a small central core. These lesions are benign, but because they are contagious through physical contact, treatment may be necessary.

Viral disorders, as a whole, are generally difficult to treat and there is no specific effective treatment for molluscum contagiosum. Because these lesions will eventually clear spontaneously and because some treatments may be painful and can increase the possibility of scarring, it is important to choose a therapy carefully. As a result, each patient is considered for treatment individually. Your provider will select therapy based on a number of factors including, but not limited to, the extent of the lesions, their location, the duration of infection, the risk of spread and development of new lesions, and age and nature of the patient.

Some common treatment methods include freezing (cryosurgery), scraping (curettage), or application of irritating medications or chemicals, such as Retin-A or cantharidin. There is also a new topical medication, Aldara, which works by stimulating an immune response that can successfully clear viral lesions. Some insurance companies, unfortunately, do not cover the cost of this medication. Occasionally if there are numerous lesions, cimetidine, (the stomach ulcer medication), given orally may be helpful. It is unclear exactly how this medication works to clear these viral lesions, but it is sometimes effective and is tolerated well.

No matter what treatment is attempted, it may be necessary to change therapy, to employ multiple therapies, either consecutively or simultaneously, to treat multiple times, or to continue treatment for weeks or sometimes months before lesions resolve. Because it is impossible to predict the course of treatment or the necessary duration of treatment, and, on rare occasions, all treatments attempted are unsuccessful, the results of treatment cannot be guaranteed. Consideration must always be given to the benign nature of these lesions and the possibility of eventual clearing without any treatment at all.