

Molluscum Contagiosum

Molluscum Contagiosum is a skin virus similar to the virus that causes a wart. It is usually found in children and is somewhat contagious. It is often contracted from exposure to infected playmates by direct skin to skin contact. Playing in swimming pools is also a very common transmission route. Once the molluscum appear, one to two months after exposure, it is spread by scratching and by touching adjacent skin. It may become swollen and appear infected intermittently. This usually signals its spontaneous disappearance. Left alone, molluscum may spread extensively but will eventually spontaneously disappear, often leaving only tiny pinpoint scars. Resolution occurs from six months to two years after their original occurrence.

The approach to treatment depends on the age of the child and the number and location of the lesions. Treatments may include freezing with liquid nitrogen, burning with a light touch of electrical current, scraping the lesion off with an instrument called a curette, or application of topical medications such as Cantharidin or Aldara. A fairly effective treatment that is painless is the application of a chemical known as Cantharidin. When applied painlessly to the skin with a cotton swab, this medication produces a **blister** within 24 hours.

DIRECTIONS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN TREATED WITH CANTHARIDIN:

The treatment may require several visits at 3-4 week intervals. It produces blisters that take several days to crust and heal leaving some pinpoint scars that occur when the molluscum heal. The scarring process occurs due to the molluscum virus and not the blistering treatment. A temporary discoloration of the skin may also occur. After application of Cantharidin, the treatment area should be left dry for 4-6 hours, following which, a bath should be taken. If the child complains of pain at the treated sites, the tape (if applied) should be removed and the areas washed with soap and water immediately. The resulting blister should not be popped, as it will usually spontaneously rupture. After washing the treated area, the blister may be covered with a bandaid and double antibiotic ointment daily until healed.