

Molluscum

(caused by *molluscum contagiosum virus*, MCV)

BACKGROUND

Molluscum is generally a benign infection and symptoms may resolve without treatment. Molluscum was once a disease primarily of children, but it has evolved to become a sexually transmitted disease in adults.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

May appear 1 week to 6 months after infection, with an average of 2 to 3 months:

- Painless, flesh colored, gray-white, yellow or pink lesions, lasting from 2 weeks to 4 years with an average of 2 years.
- Lesions appear on the genitals, abdomen, inner thigh or anal area.
- Lesions may begin as small bumps but can develop into larger sores or bumps.
- People with AIDS or others with compromised immune systems may develop numerous lesions.

TRANSMISSION

- Sexual contact (most common)
- Inanimate objects: towels and clothing
- Swimming pools and sharing baths
- Skin to skin contact
- May spread from one part of the body to another (autoinoculation)

COMPLICATIONS

- Can spread to sex partners
- If co-infected with HIV, molluscum infection may be more severe
- Molluscum increases the risk for other skin infections

PREVENTION

- Avoiding vaginal, oral or anal sex is the best way to prevent STDs.
- Avoid skin-to-skin contact with an infected person.
- Limit the number of sex partners.
- Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of molluscum infection only when the infected areas are covered or protected by the condom.
- If infected with molluscum, avoid touching the lesion and then touching other parts of the body (autoinoculation).
- Sexual partners should be examined and treated at same time.

TESTING AND TREATMENT

- Get a test from a medical provider if infection is suspected.
- Removal of lesions reduces autoinoculation and transmission to others.

Removal of lesions can be accomplished using:

- Surgery or electrosurgery
- Chemotherapy
- Cryotherapy

Note: Lesions may recur after treatment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Minnesota Department of Health
STD and HIV Section
(651) 201-5414
www.health.state.mn.us/std

Minnesota Family Planning and STD Hotline
1-800-783-2287 Voice/TTY; (651) 645-9360 (Metro)
www.sexualhealthmn.org

American Social Health Association (ASHA)
www.ashastd.org

CDC National STD and AIDS Hotlines
1-800-CDC-INFO; 1-888-232-6348 TTY
www.cdc.gov/std