

# The facts about Molluscum Contagiosum

Auckland Sexual Health Service  
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## What is Molluscum contagiosum?

- Molluscum contagiosum is a skin infection caused by a pox virus. It appears as small firm flesh-coloured bumps with waxy white centres. These can appear anywhere on the body but are common on the genital area, thighs or lower abdomen. Because of their appearance they can be confused with genital warts or pimples.

## How do I know if I have Molluscum contagiosum?

- Molluscum contagiosum is usually painless but can sometimes be itchy, especially if it gets infected.
- They usually appear within about 2-3 months after infection but this can vary.
- Without treatment they can persist for 6 months to 2 years.
- Most clear up within one year but some people find they get recurrences.
- Some people do not develop lesions even though they have come in contact with the virus.
- People with a suppressed immune system, may have problems with lesions being widespread and less responsive to treatment.

## How is Molluscum contagiosum transmitted?

- Molluscum contagiosum is spread by close skin to skin contact.
- It may also be possible for Molluscum contagiosum to be transmitted on clothing or towels.
- It can be spread from one part of the body to another by scratching.
- Molluscum contagiosum usually affects children, sexually active adults and those with a suppressed immune system.

## How is Molluscum contagiosum treated?

- Treatment is usually for cosmetic reasons as the lumps may resolve by themselves.
- Molluscum can be treated by removing the centre core with a clean needle or by freezing or burning the lesions.
- Imiquimod (Aldara) cream can also be used.

## Will sexual partner/s also have Molluscum Contagiosum?

- They may or may not. It is advisable for sexual partners to see a nurse or doctor for a check-up if they have any unexplained lumps or itches.

## Are there any complications with Molluscum contagiosum?

- There are no serious complications.
- The lesions can become infected and look red and sore. This can also happen after treatment.