

Molluscum contagiosum

Also known as molluscum, MC

Molluscum contagiosum (MC) is a harmless skin infection caused by a virus and can be passed on by skin-to-skin contact.

QUICK FACTS

- MC appears initially as painless firm, round, flesh-coloured lumps with a central dimple
- If a lump is scratched, MC can spread to the surrounding area
- MC is diagnosed by a doctor looking at the lumps
- The lumps can disappear on their own, but most people prefer treatment

What is this?

Molluscum contagiosum (MC) is a harmless skin infection caused by a virus. If left untreated, MC can persist for 6 - 18 months before going away on its own.

How do you get it?

MC is spread by skin-to-skin contact. In adults, this usually occurs during sexual contact.

What are the symptoms?

MC initially appears as painless firm, round, flesh-coloured lumps with a central dimple.

If a lump is scratched or injured, MC can spread to the surrounding skin. The lumps can take several weeks to grow and usually appear on the thighs, groin, buttocks, lower abdomen and the genital area.

From the time of infection, it usually takes 2 - 3 months for the lumps to appear but this may vary from as little as one week to as long as 6 months. Some people never get any lumps at all.

How do you test for it?

MC is diagnosed by a doctor looking at the lumps. MC has a distinctive appearance.

How is it treated?

Although the lumps usually disappear on their own, most people prefer to be treated.

Treatment can involve:

- **cryotherapy** - freezing the lumps with liquid nitrogen
- **topical cream** - applying prescribed cream or paint on the lumps

You should avoid genital hair shaving, waxing and trimming during any treatments to minimise the risk of spreading MC.

How can I protect myself?

Using a condom or dam during sex is the best way to protect yourself from MC.

Where can I get help?

- Visit a [sexual health service near you](#)
- Visit your local doctor
- Visit your local community health centre

DISCLAIMER

This fact sheet provides general sexual health information and is not intended to replace the need for a consultation with your doctor.

If you have concerns about your health, you should seek advice from your doctor.

If you require urgent care, you should go to your nearest Emergency Department or call [000](#).