

# FALCON HEALTH UPDATE MARCH 30, 2010

**Dear Falcon Families;**

**We have been notified of two instances of this virus and want to make you aware of what it is and how it should be handled. If you have further questions please contact your pediatrician.**

## **What is molluscum contagiosum?**

[Molluscum contagiosum](#) is a skin infection that causes small pearly or flesh-colored bumps. The bumps may be clear, and the center often is indented. The infection is caused by a virus. The virus is easily spread but is not harmful.

## **What are the symptoms?**

The small, round, indented bumps are usually about 0.1 in to 0.2 in in size (a little smaller than a pencil eraser). The bumps don't cause pain. They may appear alone or in groups. They most often appear on the trunk, face, eyelids, or genital area. People who have a weakened immune system may have dozens of bumps. The bumps may become inflamed and turn red as your body fights the virus.

The time from exposure to the virus until the bumps appear usually is 2 to 7 weeks, but it can take up to 6 months.

## **How does molluscum contagiosum spread?**

The virus commonly spreads through skin-to-skin contact. This includes sexual contact or touching the bumps and then touching the skin. Touching an object that has the virus on it, such as a towel, also can spread the infection. The virus can spread from one part of the body to another. Or it can spread to other people, such as among children at day care or school. The infection is contagious until the bumps are gone. Molluscum contagiosum in a child's genital area is common, usually because the child scratched the area. But sometimes it can be a sign of sexual abuse, especially if the doctor also sees other signs of sexual abuse.

To prevent molluscum contagiosum from spreading:

- Try not to scratch.
- Put a piece of tape or a bandage over the bumps.
- Do not share towels or washcloths.
- If the bumps are on your face, don't shave.
- If the bumps are in your genital area, avoid sexual contact.

## **How is it diagnosed?**

Your doctor will do a physical exam and may take a sample of the bumps for testing. If you have bumps in your genital area, your doctor may check for other sexually transmitted diseases, such as

genital herpes.

## **How is it treated?**

Healthy people may not need treatment for molluscum contagiosum, because the bumps usually go away on their own in 2 to 4 months. Some people choose to remove the bumps because they don't like how the bumps look or they don't want to spread the virus to other people. Doctors usually recommend treatment for bumps in the genital area to prevent them from spreading.

If you need treatment, your choices may include:

- Draining or scraping the bumps.
- Freezing the bumps.
- Putting medicine on the skin.
- Taking medicine by mouth.

## **Who gets molluscum contagiosum?**

Molluscum contagiosum is most common in children. It usually is seen in children ages 2 to 12 years. But wrestlers, swimmers, gymnasts, massage therapists, and people who use steam rooms and saunas also can get it. Molluscum contagiosum is more common in warm, humid climates with crowded living conditions.