



Student Health Center

UNC Wilmington

INSTRUCTION SHEET: MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed molluscum contagiosum (MC). MC is a viral infection that causes bumps on the skin. The infection is most often spread by person-to-person, skin-to-skin contact.

The bumps are typically very small, round, smooth, and flesh colored. The bumps often have a characteristic sunken center or “umbilicus”.

Molluscum can occur on any part of the body. Adults most often get the bumps in the area from the belly button down into the pubic area. The bumps can also occur on the upper thighs or buttocks. The location of the bumps is due to the sexual nature of transmission. During intercourse, an infected person’s skin rubs against a partner’s, and the virus causing MC infects the partner. Other methods of spread include sharing towels, clothing, gym equipment, or perhaps even from swimming pools. The incubation period (time from exposure to outbreak of bumps) ranges from weeks to months.

The bumps typically cause little in the way of symptoms such as itching or burning.

The course of MC is most often self-limiting: MC normally goes away on its own within six months after onset. Treatment of the bumps is sometimes undertaken for cosmetic reasons or in an attempt to prevent the spread of infection. Treatment options include removing the bumps by freezing, burning, or laser treatment by a qualified health care provider. Another option is a prescription cream that can be used at home over a period of weeks to months.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR INFECTION:

- 1- Inform any potential sexual partner about your infection, Discuss the fact that MC is contagious, and it is spread by direct, skin-to-skin contact. The infection is not known to be associated with any serious long-term effects.
- 2- If the cream is prescribed, apply it at bedtime 3 to 4 times per week. Rub a small amount of cream onto each bump. Wash your hands after you apply the cream. Leave the medicine on until the next morning (8 to 10 hours), then wash it off in the shower.
- 3- If your symptoms worsen or continue longer than expected, return to the Student Health Center or see your personal provider for re-evaluation. Referral to a dermatologist (skin doctor) is an option.