

# Molluscum contagiosum

Molluscum contagiosum is a common skin infection caused by the molluscipox virus. The virus causes a rash of pearly, skin-coloured lumps that can appear anywhere on the body. The most common places to find them are under the arms, at the back of the knees, on the inside of the elbows, and at the tops of the thighs. The lumps are usually small, with a white centre and an indented surface.

The disease is not serious and usually disappears without treatment, but this may take several months, or even longer in people whose immune defences are not working well. The infection is most common in children but has no long-term effects.

## How it spreads

The virus spreads by direct skin-to-skin contact with an infected person, especially when there are small breaks in the skin. It can also spread in bath or pool water, on towels, face washers or clothing.

## Exclusion period

Not excluded – people with molluscum contagiosum can attend the service.

## Actions for educators and other staff

Ensure staff and children have good hand hygiene.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Do not share towels and face washers.

## Actions for parents and carers

Make sure your child washes their hands thoroughly and often.

Do not share towels, face washers or clothing. Wash and dry children's bath toys after use.

Dry the affected area last after showering your child and wash your hands thoroughly after touching the spots.

Treatment is not generally needed, but see a doctor if your child develops many spots or the spots become infected.

## More information about molluscum contagiosum

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of molluscum contagiosum ([healthdirect.gov.au/molluscum-contagiosum](http://healthdirect.gov.au/molluscum-contagiosum)).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker ([healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker](http://healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker))
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.