

# Molluscum contagiosum

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## Cause

Molluscum contagiosum is a common skin infection caused by the molluscum contagiosum virus.

## Symptoms

Molluscum contagiosum shows up as small, round, pearly lumps, often around the genital area. Lumps usually show up 2-3 months after infection, but can occur as early as one week or up to six months after sexual activity.

## How is it transmitted?

Molluscum contagiosum is spread by skin-to-skin contact, mainly through sexual activity. Once infected, it can be spread around the body through shaving and scratching.

## How do I know if I have it?

It can be difficult to tell if a lump on the skin of your own genitals is a wart or molluscum contagiosum, so it is a good idea to get any lumps checked. A clinician can look at the lumps and if unsure, send a sample to a laboratory for testing.

## Treatment/management

In most cases, the lumps will go away by themselves. The infection can last up to two years, although each lump generally disappears after two or three months.

If you are worried or uncomfortable, or have another medical condition, your doctor may treat the lumps with cream or by freezing them.

Molluscum contagiosum is generally harmless and will disappear on its own in healthy people. In a few people however, such as those with HIV/AIDS, it can spread all over the body and last for a long time.

## Prevention

Using condoms and dams (a thin latex square held over the vaginal or anal area during oral sex) provides some protection against molluscum contagiosum, but they only protect the area of skin they cover.

For more information about molluscum contagiosum contact the **Sexual Health Helpline** on 9227 6178 or 1800 198 205 (country callers) or email [sexhelp@fpwa.org.au](mailto:sexhelp@fpwa.org.au)

**Practising safe sex reduces the risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmissible infections (STIs).**



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