

## MOLLUSCUM

Molluscum are smooth, pearly, skin-colored bumps on the skin. They are caused by a virus. They begin as small bumps and they may grow as large as a pencil eraser. Many have a pit in the middle where the virus lives.

The bumps can appear on the face, neck, armpit, arms and hands. In fact, they can be anywhere on the body except the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. Usually they are found in lines or groups where the child has scratched.

### CARE AT HOME

The bumps can last from a few months to a few years. They will usually go away by themselves. They can be itchy, so here are some tips to keep your child more comfortable and prevent spreading the virus to other areas:

- Give acetaminophen (such as Tempra® or Tylenol®) to make your child more comfortable. Be sure to follow the instructions on the bottle.
- Be sure to keep the affected areas clean and dry.
- Teach your child to carefully wash his hands, paying special attention to the fingernails. (Refer to the Helping Hand: *Hand Hygiene*, HH-IV-80.) All children should avoid sharing towels, bed linens and clothing.

### CHILD CARE OR SCHOOL

- Children who have molluscum are not a health risk to others and they do not need to be kept away from child care or school.
- Molluscum may be loosely covered with a band-aid to reduce scratching and further irritation and infection.
- Remind your child about careful handwashing while at school or child care.

### WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

Call your child's doctor if:

- You think an infection has formed (redness, oozing or drainage with odor; feels hot to the touch).
- The infection seems to be spreading over a large part of the body.



**Picture 1** The bumps may be loosely covered with a band-aid.

## TREATMENT

In healthy children, the virus usually goes away on its own within a few months to a few years. However, in more severe cases, a doctor may treat the bumps to keep the virus from spreading further on the child. Types of treatment include medicine that is put on the bumps, liquid nitrogen treatment, and curettage (removing the growths).

- **Medicines** – There are different types of liquid medicines that can be put directly on the molluscum with a Q-tip. Usually a small blister forms in a few hours. The medicine is then washed off. After the blister bursts, a scab forms. When the scab falls off, the bump should be gone. This treatment does not hurt the child. It is used carefully on the face and in skin creases. Sometimes there is no blistering at all. However if the child's skin is very sensitive, there may be a lot of blistering. The blisters are uncomfortable, but they are not very deep and go away within a few days. If the child has a lot of molluscum, the doctor may prescribe medicine to be taken by mouth for several weeks.
- **Liquid nitrogen** – Freezing with liquid nitrogen is another form of treatment. Liquid nitrogen is put on with a cotton applicator. It feels hot for a moment, and then may form a blister at the site. See the Helping Hand: *Warts: Liquid Nitrogen Treatment*, HH-I-156.
- **Curettage** – Your child's doctor may decide to remove molluscum by scraping the bump or removing the center. This is done only after numbing the area with a special cream. All these treatments cause some discomfort. Sometimes more than one treatment is needed.

## FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENT

The doctor will probably want to see your child again in a few weeks. More than one treatment may be needed. If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse.