Information for parents on Molluscum Contagiosum

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Molluscum Contagiosum (Pox Virus)

- Molluscum contagiosum is a common, relatively harmless viral infection that is characterised by raised, dome like pearly lesions on the skin. Molluscum usually develop 2 – 8 weeks after becoming infected with the virus.

- As the name suggests it spreads easily (is contagious) and can be spread to others by close personal contact with someone who has it or from objects such as shared towels of flannels.

- Molluscum are not usually painful but can be unsightly especially if occurring in large numbers on visible areas of the skin. Once one area of skin becomes affected the rash can spread to other areas

- The average duration of Molluscum is 12-18 months although in some patients the problem can last for up to 36 months.

- The average number of Molluscum spots on a patient is about 20 although in some cases numbers can be in the hundreds.

- Molluscum is more common and extensive in children with eczema or children who are taking immunosuppressive therapy.

- Occasionally they can cause itch and an eczema-like reaction (redness and scaling) can develop around the area. This can be treated with moisturiser and if itch occurs a 1% Hydrocortisone ointment can be used until itch resolves.

- The spots can become angry and look as though they are infected. This is often the body’s immune response against the virus and can be managed with a little topical antiseptic. A scar is not usually left when the molluscum resolve spontaneously but a tiny dent or mark may remain

- Treatment recommended is usually conservative management and await natural clearing in young children. If they are persistent and troublesome other destructive alternative methods can be used although these are uncomfortable for the child. They include curettage, cryotherapy and use of topical preparations. All destructive treatments have a small risk of scaring the skin.

- Children with active Molluscum ideally should not share clothes, towels or flannels because of transmission of the virus.

- If attending a creche / playgroup keep lesions covered with clothing. There is no need to keep your child off school, nor should they stop swimming etc.

- After an episode of molluscum has cleared away, further infection is a rare occurrence.