

WARTS AND MOLLUSCUM CONTAGIOSUM (MC)

What are warts?

Warts are benign growths caused by a virus – human papillomavirus (HPV) Over 80 different types of HPV have been identified. Even though warts appear deep; seeming to have “roots”, they infect the uppermost layer of the skin.

What is Molluscum Contagiosum (MC)?

MC is caused by pox virus. There are four sub types of the virus. These groups are primarily infected young children (MOST COMMON), sexually active adults, and immune-suppressed individual (HIV, cancer, etc.)

How do you get warts/molluscum?

Warts/MC is viral, and like most viral infections, is contagious. Peak incidence occurs in young children and teens. Spread of warts is often indirect, such as walking barefoot. Spread of MC, however, is usually by direct skin to skin contact. Swimming pools have been associated with infection. From contact to visible wart/MC is usually several weeks to months. The risk of catching the virus is small, however, and depends on individual susceptibility.

Why do some get warts and others don't?

Some people get warts/MC from frequent exposure to the virus. Warts/MC invades more easily when skin has been damaged. With dry skin there is a higher frequency, or in people who bite their nails or pick at hangnails. Others are just naturally prone to the wart/MC virus. Just as some catch colds more easily, others develop warts/MC more easily. This is true of those with eczema or asthma.

Does warts/MC need to be treated?

In children, warts/MC often disappears without treatment after several months or years. However since warts/MC can be spread to others and can spread to new areas on your own body, it is probably best to treat them.

There is no simple cure!

If you decide to have your wart/MC treated, keep in mind that a wart/MC is a viral infection. There is no cure for ANY viral infection, whether the flu, chickenpox or warts/MC. Viral conditions run a natural course. Warts/MC are no exception. Treatment of warts/MC must be tempered with the knowledge that most spontaneously regress over time. It's important that the “cure” not be worse than the disease.

How do dermatologists treat warts/MC?

Many approaches exist. A few are listed below:

Electrodessication	Retin-A Cream/Tazorac	Laser
Scraping/Curettage	Freezing with liquid nitrogen	Oral zinc or vitamin A
Cantharone	Injection of cancer drugs	Candida injections
Immune-stimulation	Interferon	Salicylic Acid

1. There is no guaranteed treatment method available for warts/MC.
2. Multiple treatments may be required.
3. The treatment may be time consuming and require multiple office visits.
4. The treatments may be expensive. There will be a charge for each treatment.
5. Treated areas may develop new warts/MC, further complicating treatment.
6. **Treated area(s) may leave discoloration, scar(s), or painful scar(s), permanent numbness in treated sites (very rare).**
7. There is no guarantee that even after multiple treatments, the wart(s)/MC will be cleared.
8. The outcome treatment depends mostly on the viral-host interaction. (i.e., the nature of the viral subtype I'm infected with, and my own natural immunity).
9. The warts/MC may reoccur after clinical resolution.