

Translucent, Eroded Papules

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A seven-year-old boy presents with umbilicated translucent and eroded papules on his abdomen and axillae. They are pruritic and appear to be spreading. His younger brother recently had similar lesions treated.

What is your diagnosis?

Molluscum contagiosum (MC) is caused by a poxvirus, usually MC virus 1. Typically, young children are affected, but also sexually active adults and immunosuppressed individuals (especially HIV). Lesions in adults are typically found in the groin and genital region.

Individual lesions are smooth, firm, dome-shaped, skin-coloured papules measuring 3 mm to 5 mm, some of which will show evidence of umbilication. In children, they are often generalized, ranging from a few to > 100 lesions. There may be adjacent eczema in some cases and secondary bacterial infection of excoriated molluscum papules can also occur.

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Figure 1. Translucent and eroded papules

It is a clinical diagnosis, although occasionally a skin biopsy is required. Education and reassurance are key and treatment is not always necessary since this is a self-resolving condition. If lesions are widespread and therapy is requested, treatment options include:

- liquid nitrogen cryotherapy (older children and adults),
- cantharidin application,
- salicylic acid,
- curettage,
- oral cimetidine,
- topical tretinoin and
- imiquimod cream.

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