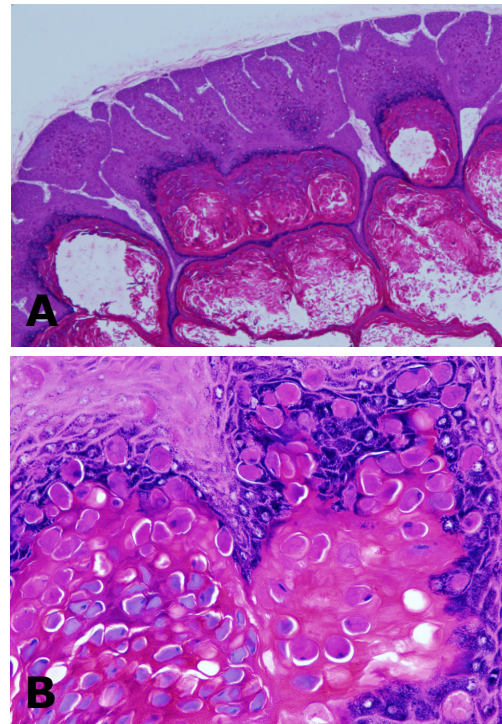


(Refer to page 113)

Answer: Molluscum contagiosum

Molluscum contagiosum is a poxvirus infection of the skin and mucous membrane caused by a virus in the subgenus Molluscipoxvirus. Molluscum contagiosum occurs as a solitary or multiple dome-shaped, umbilicated, papules which range in size from 2 to 8mm in diameter. The head and neck, trunk and genitalia of children and adolescents are more often involved. Extensive lesions usually occur in immunocompromised individuals.

Histologically, molluscum contagiosum consists of inverted lobules of hyperplastic squamous epithelium (**Panel A**). Eosinophilic inclusion bodies (Henderson-Patterson bodies) are pathognomonic and are formed in the cytoplasm of keratinocytes just above the basal layer, and they progressively enlarge. At the level of the granular layer, the bodies occupy the entire cell. These molluscum bodies are eventually extruded with keratinous debris through a central crater-like ostium. There is no inflammatory response in the early eruptive phase but a variable chronic inflammatory cell infiltrate is seen in regressing lesions. Secondary infection and ulceration may occur.



Panels: **A**) Inverted lobules of hyperplastic squamous epithelium and, **B**) Henderson-Patterson bodies.

Spontaneous regression often occurs within a year in immunocompetent individuals. Lesions that fail to involute can be treated with a variety of methods including cryotherapy, curettage and topical application of immune modulators (Iquimod). Cidofovir, a drug with broad spectrum anti-DNA virus activity, has also been successful in patients infected with the Human Immune Deficiency virus (HIV).

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