

IMPETIGO

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Impetigo?

Impetigo is a contagious skin infection caused by Streptococcus (Strep) or Staphylococcus (Staph) bacteria. The infection occurs when the bacteria get into cuts, scrapes or insect bites, but can also develop without any notable damage to the skin. The infection is most commonly seen in children, especially in warm weather.

How is Impetigo spread?

Impetigo is spread through direct contact with the sores of an infected person. Less commonly, it can be spread through by coming in contact with clothing, bed linens, towels and even toys contaminated with discharge from the sores of an infected person. Several types of impetigo exist, with differing signs and symptoms. However, the most common form of impetigo is impetigo contagiosa.

How is it treated?

A physician should be consulted to examine, diagnose and order treatment for impetigo. Sometimes the doctor may choose to treat minor cases of impetigo with only hygienic measures such as keeping the skin clear. The infection can also be treated with a topical antibiotic ointment which is applied to the skin, or in severe cases, an oral antibiotic may be necessary to clear the infection.

A person with impetigo should follow these measures to help the infection from spreading to others:

- Gently wash the affected areas with mild soap and running water. After skin is dry, cover affected areas lightly with a non-stick dressing.
- Wash the infected person's clothes, linens and towels daily and avoid sharing them with anyone else in the family.
- Wear gloves when applying antibiotic ointment and wash hands thoroughly after removing gloves.
- Avoid touching or scratching the sores until they heal.
- Wash hands frequently. Hands are the most significant means of transmitting infection.

How can we prevent Impetigo?

Avoid direct contact with known cases. Keeping your skin clean is the best way to keep it healthy. Treat cuts, scrapes, insect bites and other wounds right away by washing the affected areas to prevent infection.

Exclude students with impetigo from school, day care, and sports involving skin-to-skin contact until 24 hours after treatment has begun and discharge has subsided.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF IMPETIGO CONTAGIOSA

- Starts as red sore on face, usually on nose, mouth, hands or arms.
- Sores develop 7-10 days after bacteria enter the skin.
- Sores are itchy, but not painful.
- Sores rupture oozing fluid or pus.
- Honey-colored crust is formed.
- Crust disappears leaving a red mark that heals without scarring.
- Fever is unlikely.
- Swollen lymph nodes may be present in affected area.
- Touching or scratching sores can spread infection to other parts of the body.

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