

IMPETIGO

WHAT IS IMPETIGO?

Impetigo is a common infection of the top layers of skin caused by bacteria that are frequently carried as normal skin flora.

- Usually begins as small red sores or blisters that can leak fluid and form a yellow crust around the mouth, arms, legs, or diaper area.
- Can develop anywhere there is injury to the skin including cuts, scrapes, insect bites, or even irritation caused by a runny nose.



Impetigo of the face

Impetigo is contagious:

- It is unlikely to spread to others if wounds are kept covered.
- It can spread from one person to another by close contact with the sores of someone who is infected or items they have touched.
- It can be itchy, so children can also spread the infection when they scratch and then touch other parts of their body.

HOW LONG DOES IMPETIGO LAST?

- With proper treatment, sores should typically heal within 1 week.
- There may be some darkening or lightening of the skin which can take up to 1 year to return to normal; however, sores do not usually scar unless your child repeatedly picks at them.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR IMPETIGO?

If there are only a few small sores, impetigo is easy to treat with soap, water, and a prescription antibiotic ointment or over the counter Neosporin (however, Neosporin is unlikely to be as effective) that is applied to the skin with the following steps:

1. Wash your hands and wear gloves, if available.
2. Use a warm, soapy washcloth to gently remove any crust over the sores. This allows the medication to reach the bacteria. It is okay if this causes a small amount of bleeding.

Revised on 6.14.2021

Disclaimer: These guidelines are to help the caretaker with treatment at home. However, if you are ever concerned about your child's health, you should see a physician in person

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3. Apply the antibiotic ointment to each sore and the area of skin around it. Start rubbing from the outside and work to the center of the sore.
4. Cover the area loosely with gauze or a Band-Aid. Do not use completely occlusive wound dressings as they might inhibit healing and facilitate spread.
5. Wash your hands when finished. Repeat as instructed by your antibiotic prescription.

Large or more widespread sores may require a prescription oral antibiotic to take by mouth. Sores should still be covered loosely with gauze or a bandage. This helps air get to the area while still preventing your child from touching and spreading germs.

Once you start treatment:

- Wash any clothes, towels, bed linens or other items that may have touched the bacteria. These items should not be shared with anyone else.

If your child is itching:

- Keep fingernails cut short and have them wear cotton socks or mittens on their hands to prevent scratching.

Children can generally return to school or daycare as long as any sores, blisters or drainage can be contained in a clean, dry bandage.

WHEN SHOULD YOU SEE YOUR DOCTOR?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- Sores are rapidly increasing in size or number
- Your child starts to act very sick

Call during office hours if:

- There has been no improvement within 48-72 hours of starting antibiotic treatment (topical or oral)
- The impetigo is not healed after completing antibiotic treatment
- A fever (temperature > 101°F) or sore throat occurs
- You have any other concerns

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