

Impetigo

Overview

- Impetigo is a common skin infection caused by streptococcus (strep) or staphylococcus (staph) bacteria.
- Mostly, the skin keeps bacteria out.
- If you have a cut, bite (insect, human or animal) graze, eczema or injury to the skin, this usually heals but sometimes bacteria can enter the body and grow there, causing inflammation and infection.
- Impetigo may also occur on skin where there is no visible break.



Who gets impetigo?

- It is most common in children, infants and people who have lower immune function for some reason.
- Also more common if children or adults are living in poor or crowded houses
- Impetigo is **contagious**, meaning it is easy to spread it to other parts of your body or to other people such as family members or classmates
- If the fluid that oozes from impetigo blisters touches an open area on your skin, you may get impetigo too.



Symptoms

- Impetigo often starts as a single blister or red lesion
- Blisters may fill with pus or yellow honey coloured fluid
- Also starts as any lesion that doesn't heal and develops a crusty scab
- Common sites are skin lesions on the face, lips, arms, or legs, that spread to other areas

Diagnosis

- Impetigo can usually be diagnosed based on the appearance and history.
- Skin swab – sometimes needed if not getting better or keeps recurring

Treatment

1. Remove crusted area by washing with saline or antibacterial soap (1 to 3 times each day)
2. Apply topical antibiotic or antiseptic ointment if prescribed
3. Keep affected areas covered with plasters or dressings and stay away from school or childcare until at least 24 hours after treatment started.
4. If not getting better in 2 to 3 days, you may need medical attention to see if oral antibiotics are needed.
5. Take care not to share towels, facecloths, or other personal care products.
6. Wash your hands thoroughly with antibacterial soap after touching the skin lesions or treating your child.



Prevention

- Reminder: Impetigo is very easily spread to other parts of your body or other people.
- Make sure you have your own towel, soap and face towels, and never share them (disposable paper towels are useful).
- Keep bed linen, clothes and towels separate.
- All family members should use an antibacterial soap.
- Keep your fingernails cut short. Try not to scratch or pick at sores.
- Keep sores covered with a dressing, such as gauze and tape.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food.



For More Information

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