



IMPETIGO

What is impetigo?

Impetigo is a common infection of the skin resulting in blisters that may occur anywhere on the body but are usually observed around the nose and mouth. It is caused by one of two types of bacteria: group A streptococci or *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Who gets impetigo?

Anyone can get impetigo, but some factors increase someone's risk of getting this infection. It is most common in children between the ages of 2 to 5 years. People with scabies infection are at increased risk for impetigo. Participating in activities where cuts or scrapes are common can also increase someone's risk of impetigo.

Close contact with another person with impetigo is the most common risk factor for illness. Crowded conditions, such as schools, daycares, or military training facilities can increase the risk of spreading impetigo. Lack of proper hand washing, body washing, and facial cleanliness can also increase someone's risk of getting impetigo. Impetigo occurs more in the hot, humid summer months.

What are the symptoms of impetigo?

Impetigo is a mild infection that can occur anywhere on the body, but it most often affects exposed skin, such as around the nose and mouth or on arms and legs. Symptoms include red, itchy sores that break open and leak a clear fluid or pus for a few days. After, a crusty yellow or "honey-colored" scab forms over the sore, which will heal without leaving a scar. More serious complications, such as post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis or rheumatic fever, are infrequent.

How is impetigo spread?

Impetigo is spread person to person through direct contact with drainage from the blisters. Blisters appear four to 10 days after exposure.

How is impetigo treated?

Impetigo is usually treated with either topical or oral antibiotics depending on the number of sores. Once the sores heal, someone with impetigo is usually not able to spread the bacteria to others.

When can a person return to work or school after having impetigo?

People with impetigo can return to work, school, or daycare 24 hours after they begin antibiotic treatment and can keep all sores on exposed skin covered.



Frequently Asked Questions

What can a person do to minimize the spread of impetigo?

People can get impetigo more than once. Having impetigo does not protect someone from getting it again in the future. Follow these steps to minimize the spread of impetigo:

- Keep sores caused by impetigo covered to help prevent spreading impetigo-causing bacteria to others.
- Practice good wound care and appropriate personal hygiene.
- Wash the clothes, linens, and towels of anyone who has impetigo every day. These items should not be shared with anyone else. After they have been washed, these items are safe for others to use.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/groupastrep/diseases-public/impetigo.html>

Delaware's "Managing Infectious Disease in Childcare Settings" manual:
<https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/epi/files/ChildCareManual2021.pdf>