



Impetigo

What is impetigo?

Impetigo is a mild skin infection that is common in children, and most often occurs in the summertime. It is found in all parts of the world and is usually caused by bacteria that get into scrapes, cold sores, insect bites, or patches of eczema.

What are the symptoms?

A child with impetigo will have a skin rash that looks like a group of small blisters or red bumps. It can take from one to ten days for the rash to appear after a person has become infected. After these blisters appear they often burst, and fluid then seeps out. When the fluid dries, the blisters become coated with a yellow or grey crust. The blistered area will often be surrounded by redness. The rash will spread if it is not treated. This rash usually appears around the nose, the mouth, and other parts of the face. It can also appear on any skin not covered by clothes, such as arms and legs. In severe cases of impetigo there may be swelling of the lymph nodes in the face or neck, accompanied by fever, pain and weakness.

How is impetigo spread?

Impetigo is easily passed by person-to-person contact. It may be spread when someone directly touches the rash with their hand and then touches another person, or it can spread by touching surfaces, towels or clothing that have been in touch with the skin rash from an infected person.

How is impetigo diagnosed?

See a healthcare provider if you think your child has impetigo. Impetigo can be easily treated with prescribed antibiotic medications.

Who is at risk of impetigo infection?

Anyone can become infected, but young children in group settings such as schools or childcare settings are more likely to be exposed. Parents and contacts of infected children (ie: siblings and playmates) may also become infected.

How can impetigo be prevented?

Practice good personal hygiene.

- Keep nails short and clean.

A-Z DISEASE FACT SHEETS

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after touching a rash.
- Wash hands often to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- Do not share facecloths or towels and keep the infected person's towels and facecloths separate from others in the household. Wash infected towels, linens and clothing in hot soapy water and machine dry.
- Encourage not to touch or pick sores

Use good environmental management. Thoroughly clean surfaces -especially those that are touched frequently. Wash and disinfect toys and surfaces in the home and childcare setting regularly. A chlorine-based disinfectant is recommended.

Stay home if sick. Children should stay home from school and childcare for 24 hours after they start taking an antibiotic, or as recommended by a healthcare provider.

How is impetigo treated?

See a healthcare provider to determine treatment options. Antibiotics are often prescribed when the infection is caused by bacteria. Treatment may be required for close contacts even if they do not show any symptoms (carriers).

What is the public health response?

There is no Public Health response currently. As impetigo is highly infectious, actively preventing the spread to others in close contact settings, such as schools and childcare facilities, is important.

Further Information

For additional information, contact your health-care provider, local Public Health office or Tele-Care 811.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Canadian Pediatric Society: www.cps.ca

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