

DESCRIPTION

A common bacterial skin infection that affects the top layers of the skin. It usually involves the skin of the face, arms, and legs. Impetigo can affect all ages, but it is most common in infants and children.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- A localized (not spreading) red rash with many small blisters. Some blisters contain pus, and yellow crusts form when they break. The blisters don't hurt, but they may itch.
- Slight fever (sometimes).

CAUSES

Staphylococcal or streptococcal (or both) bacteria growing in the upper skin layers. It is usually spread from person to person, or from germs on something an infected person has touched. The time from exposure to the germs and start of symptoms is 1 to 3 days. A person is contagious when the rash is crusting or oozing pus.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Contact with an infected person.
- Skin that is sensitive to sun and irritants, such as soap and makeup.
- Other skin problems, such as bites, burns, infections, sores, or injuries.
- Poor general health.
- Warm, moist weather.
- Daycare for children.
- Poor hygiene.

GENERAL MEASURES

Curable in 7 to 10 days with treatment. It may recur in children. Self care steps include:

- Keep fingernails short. Don't scratch the blisters.
- If there is an outbreak in the family, urge all members to use antibacterial soap. Wash hands carefully.
- Use separate towels for each family member, or substitute paper towels temporarily.
- Don't share razors with other people.
- Scrub sores with gauze and antiseptic soap. Break any pustules. Remove all crusts, and expose and cleanse all lesions. If crusts are difficult to remove, soak them in warm soapy water and scrub gently.
- Cover impetigo sores with gauze and tape to keep hands away from them.

MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotic ointments may be prescribed.
- Oral antibiotics may be prescribed.
- ↪ Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your antibiotic prescription, even if you start to feel better.
- ↪ Antibiotics may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.
- ↪ Impetigo is usually no longer contagious 24-48 hours after beginning antibiotic treatment.

Your doctor also recommends the following over-the-counter medications. These medications may offer significant symptom relief:

- ❑ For fever or pain use acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
(Acetaminophen and ibuprofen may also be alternated every 3 hours for persistent fever or pain.)

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

- Fever occurs or if rash begins to spread and does not heal in 3 days.