

Impetigo

What is Impetigo?

Impetigo is a highly contagious bacterial skin infection with draining sores that usually appear on the scalp, face and hands; but can occur anywhere on the body.

How is it Spread?

A person is exposed to the bacteria that cause impetigo when they come into contact with the sores of a person who is infected or with items they have touched, such as clothing, linens, towels and toys.

Signs and Symptoms



Classic signs and symptoms of impetigo involve red sores that quickly rupture, ooze for a few days and then form a yellowish-brown crust. The sores usually occur around the nose and mouth but can be spread to other areas of the body by fingers, clothing and towels.

A less common form of the disorder, called “bullous impetigo”, may feature larger blisters that occur on the trunk or diaper area of infants and young children.

A more serious form of impetigo, called “ecthyma”, penetrates deeper into the skin causing painful fluid- or pus-filled sores that turn into deep ulcers.

Diagnosis

Doctors usually diagnose impetigo by looking at the distinctive sores, lab tests aren't necessary. But if the sores don't clear, even with antibiotic treatment, a doctor may take a sample of the liquid produced by a sore and test it to see what types of antibiotics might work best on it. Some types of the bacteria that cause impetigo have become resistant to certain antibiotic drugs.

Treatment

Antibiotics are the primary treatment against impetigo. These drugs can be delivered by an ointment or cream that is applied directly to the sores. Soaking the affected area in warm water or using wet compresses to help remove the overlying scabs may be recommended.

If an individual has more than just a few impetigo sores, a doctor might recommend antibiotic drugs that can be taken by mouth. Be sure to finish the entire course of medication even if the sores are healed. This helps prevent the infection from recurring and makes antibiotic resistance less likely!

Risk Factors

Factors that increase the risk of impetigo include:

Age and preexisting –Although anyone can develop impetigo, it most commonly occurs in children ages 2 to 6 years. Older adults and people with diabetes or a compromised immune system are more likely to develop ecthyma, a deeper and more serious form of impetigo.

Crowded conditions – Impetigo spreads easily in schools and child care settings.

Warm, humid weather – Impetigo infections are more common in summer.

Certain sports – Participation in sports that involve skin-to-skin contact, such as football or wrestling, increases the risk of developing impetigo.

Broken skin –The bacteria that cause impetigo often enter your skin through a small skin injury, insect bite or rash.

Prevention

Keeping the skin clean is the best way to keep it healthy. Treat cuts, scrapes, insect bites and other wounds right away by washing the affected areas, and keep open wounds covered when active.

If a family member already has impetigo, take these measures to help keep the infection from spreading to others:

- Gently wash the affected areas with mild soap and running water and then cover lightly with gauze.
- Wash an infected person's clothes, linens and towels every day and don't share them with anyone else in the family.
- Wear gloves when applying any antibiotic ointment and wash hands thoroughly afterward.
- Cut an infected child's nails short to prevent damage from scratching.
- Wash hands frequently and properly.
- Keep children home until the doctor says he or she is not contagious.



For more sources of information on this topic visit:

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT www.scchealth.co

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES www.michigan.gov/mdhhs

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION www.cdc.gov