

Boil

Definition

- Staph skin infection causing a painful red lump in the skin

Health Information

Symptoms

- Bright red lump (swelling) in the skin.
- Painful, even when not being touched.
- Usually 1/2 to 1 inch across (1 to 2 cm).
- After about a week, the center of the boil becomes filled with pus. The center becomes soft and mushy.
- The skin over the boil then develops a large pimple. This is known as "coming to a head".

Cause

- A boil is an infection of a hair follicle (skin pore).
- Boils are caused by the Staph bacteria.
- Friction from tight clothing is a risk factor. Examples are the groin, armpit, buttock, thigh or waist.
- Shaving is another risk factor. Examples are shaving the face, legs, armpits or pubic hair.

Prevention of Boils

- Handwashing is the key to prevention of Staph infections. Have everyone in the home wash their hands often with an antibacterial soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Have everyone shower daily with an antibacterial soap. Showers are best because baths still leave many Staph bacteria on the skin.
- Discourage nose picking. 30% of people have Staph bacteria present in their nose.
- When shaving anywhere on the body, never try to shave too close. Reason: It causes small cuts that allow Staph bacteria to enter the skin.

Prevention- Bleach Baths for Recurrent Boils

- Some doctors recommend bleach baths to prevent boils from coming back.
- Use 1/2 cup (120 ml) of regular bleach per 1 full bathtub of water.
- Soak for 10 minutes twice weekly.
- This concentration of bleach is similar to a swimming pool.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- A boil is a Staph infection of a hair follicle.
- It can become a recurrent problem.
- It is not a serious infection, but it needs a doctor for treatment.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Moist Heat:

- Heat can help bring the boil "to a head" so it can be drained.
- Apply a warm, wet washcloth to the boil for 15 minutes 3 times a day.

3. **Pain Medicine:**
 - Until it drains, all boils are painful.
 - To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) OR ibuprofen. Use as needed.
4. **Opening the Boil - Done Only By A Doctor:**
 - The main treatment of boils is to open them and drain the pus.
 - Then, boils will usually heal on their own.
 - Draining the boil must always be done in a medical setting.
5. **Caution - Do Not Squeeze:**
 - Do not squeeze a boil or try to open a boil yourself.
 - Reason: These can force bacteria into the bloodstream or cause more boils.
 - Squeezing a boil on the face can be very dangerous.
6. **Antibiotics By Mouth:**
 - Antibiotics may or may not be helpful. Your doctor will decide.
 - If prescribed, take the antibiotic as directed.
7. **Small Red Lump:**
 - A small red lump is most often a minor infection of a hair follicle.
 - It may or may not become a boil.
 - Use an antibiotic ointment to keep it from becoming larger. No prescription is needed.
 - Apply it to the red lump 3 times per day.
 - **Call Back If:** The small red lump becomes larger.
8. **Pus Precautions:**
 - Pus or other drainage from an open boil contains lots of Staph bacteria.
 - Once a boil is opened it will drain pus for 3 to 4 days. Then it will slowly heal up.
 - Cover all draining boils with a clean, dry bandage. Usually, a 4 by 4 inch gauze pad and tape is used.
 - Change the bandage twice daily.
 - Clean the skin around the boil with an antibacterial soap each time.
 - Carefully dispose of the bandage into the regular trash.
9. **What to Expect:**
 - Without treatment, the body will gradually wall off the Staph infection.
 - After about a week, the center of the boil will fill with pus. It will become soft.
 - The skin over the boil then develops a large pimple. This is known as "coming to a head".
 - The boil is now ready for draining by your doctor.
 - Without draining, it will open and drain by itself in 3 or 4 days.
10. **Return to School or Child Care:**
 - Closed boils cannot spread to others.
 - Children with a closed boil can attend school or child care.
 - The pus or drainage in open boils can spread infection to others.
 - For open boils, the drainage needs to be covered completely with a dry bandage. If not, stay home until it heals up (usually 1 week).
11. **Return to Sports:**
 - Children with a closed boil may be able to play sports.
 - Children with an open boil cannot return to contact sports until drainage has stopped.
 - Check with the team's trainer if there is one.

Call Your Doctor If

- Fever occurs
- Redness spreads beyond the boil
- Boil becomes over 2 inches (5 cm) across
- Boil comes to a head (soft pus-colored center)
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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