

Impetigo - Infected Sores

Definition

- Coin-shaped sores on the skin
- Covered by scabs or crusts that are the color of honey
- Skin infection caused by a bacteria

Health Information

Symptoms

- Sores smaller than 1 inch (2.5 cm)
- Often covered by a soft, yellow-brown scab or crust
- Scabs may drain pus or yellow fluid off and on
- Starts as small red bumps. These change quickly to cloudy blisters or pimples. Then, they become open sores which drain fluid or pus.
- Sores increase in size
- Any sore or wound that grows and doesn't heal is usually impetigo.

Cause

- A skin infection caused by a bacteria. It starts in a small break in the skin. Examples are a scratch or insect bite.
- The most common bacteria are Staph and Strep.
- Impetigo often spreads and increases in number from scratching.

Prevention of Spread to Others

- Impetigo is spread to others by skin to skin contact.
- Wash the hands often. Try not to touch the sores.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Impetigo is a bacterial skin infection. Most often, it starts in a scratch or insect bite.
- It usually responds to treatment with any antibiotic ointment.
- Sometimes an oral antibiotic is needed.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Remove Scabs:

- Soak off the scab using soap and warm water. The bacteria live underneath the scab.

3. Antibiotic Ointment:

- Put an antibiotic ointment on the sores. Do this 3 times per day.
- Examples are Bacitracin or Polysporin. No prescription is needed. You also can use one you already have.
- Cover it with a Band-Aid to prevent scratching and spread.
- Repeat the washing, ointment and Band-Aid 3 times per day.

4. **Antibiotic by Mouth:**

- Some types of impetigo need a prescription antibiotic to clear it up.
- The antibiotic will kill the bacteria that are causing the skin infection.
- Give the antibiotic as directed.
- Try not to forget any of the doses.

5. **Do Not Pick at the Sores:**

- Help your child not to scratch and pick at the sores. This spreads the impetigo.

6. **What to Expect:**

- Sore stops growing in 1 to 2 days.
- The skin is healed in 1 week.

7. **Return to School:**

- Impetigo is spread to others by skin to skin contact.
- Wash the hands often. Try not to touch the sores.
- For mild impetigo (1 or 2 sores), can go to school if it is covered.
- For severe impetigo, child needs to take an oral antibiotic for more than 24 hours. Then your child can go back to school.
- **Contact Sports.** In general, needs to be on antibiotics for 3 days before returning to sports. There must be no pus or drainage. Check with the team's trainer if there is one.

Call Your Doctor If

- Impetigo sore gets bigger after 48 hours on antibiotic ointment
- Gets new impetigo sore on antibiotic ointment
- Not healed up in 1 week
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

Author: Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP

Copyright 2000-2022 Schmitt Pediatric Guidelines LLC

Disclaimer: This health information is for educational purposes only. You the reader assume full responsibility for how you choose to use it. The information contained in this handout should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. Listing of any resources does not imply an endorsement.