

Impetigo

What is impetigo?

A common skin infection caused by streptococcal or staphylococcal bacteria

What are the signs or symptoms?

Small, red pimples or fluid-filled blisters with crusted yellow scabs found most often on the face, but may be anywhere on body

What are the incubation and contagious periods?

- Incubation period: Skin sores develop in 7 to 10 days after bacteria attach to the skin.
- Contagious period: Until the skin sores are treated with antibiotics for at least 24 hours or the crusting lesions are no longer present.

How is it spread?

- Direct contact with an infected person or from contaminated surfaces.
- Germ enters an opening on skin (eg, cut, insect bite, burn) and causes oozing, leading to honey-colored crusted sores.
- Occurs year-round, but most common in warm weather in cut and scraped skin. Also occurs in cold weather when the skin around the nose and face is damaged by runny nasal secretions and nose wiping that irritates the skin.

How do you control it?

- Exclusion of infected individuals until antibiotics started for 24 hours.
- Hand washing.
- Clip fingernails to reduce further injury of tissues by scratching and subsequent spread through contaminated fingernails.
- In the event of an outbreak (more than one infected child in a group), consult with the local health department. The problem could involve antibiotic-resistant staphylococcal bacteria.

What are the roles of the caregiver/teacher and the family?

- Consult health professional for a treatment plan.
- Exercise good hand hygiene.
- Clean infected area with soap and water.
- Loosely cover infected area to allow airflow for healing and avoid contact with others in group care settings.
- Wash hands after coming into contact with sores or when changing bandages at the group setting and home.
- Launder contaminated clothing articles daily.
- Notify the local health department if an outbreak occurs.

Exclude from group setting?

Yes.

- As soon as suspected.
- If family is unable to pick up the child promptly, wash affected area with soap and water and cover it.

Readmit to group setting?

- Twenty-four hours after beginning medication
- When the child is able to participate and staff determine that they can care for the child without compromising their ability to care for the health and safety of the other children in the group

Comment

When impetigo is caused by group A streptococcus, treatment and complication issues are similar to when this bacterium causes strep throat (see “Strep Throat (Streptococcal Pharyngitis) and Scarlet Fever”).

