

Impetigo

What is Impetigo?

Impetigo is a highly contagious bacterial skin infection most common among pre-school children. It is not as common in adults. It is primarily caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* and sometimes by *Streptococcus pyogenes*. It frequently occurs during hot, humid summer weather.

Symptoms of Impetigo

Bullous impetigo

Bullous impetigo primarily affects infants and children younger than two years of age. It causes painless, fluid-filled blisters that usually appear on the trunk, arms and legs. The skin around the blister is usually red and itchy but not sore. The blisters, which break within 24 hours, scab over with a yellow-coloured crust. They may be large or small, and may last longer than blisters from other types of impetigo.

Ecthyma

Ecthyma is a more serious form of impetigo in which the infection goes deeper into the skin's second layer, the dermis. Signs and symptoms may include:

- Painful fluid or pus-filled sores that turn into deep ulcers, usually on the legs and feet
- A hard, thick, gray-yellow crust covering the sores
- Swollen lymph glands in the affected area
- Little holes the size of pinheads to the size of pennies that appear after the crust fades
- Scars that remain after the ulcers heal

How Impetigo spreads

The infection is spread when someone touches the impetigo blisters and then touches another person. The infected person should:

- Avoid contact with other people until antibiotics have been taken for at least 24 hours
- Cover the impetigo sores with gauze and tape
- Wash hands with soap and water often and take baths or showers regularly
- Use separate towels and wash cloths from other household members
- Separate the infected person's bed linens, towels, and clothing from those of other family members
- Avoid contact with newborn babies and people who are sick

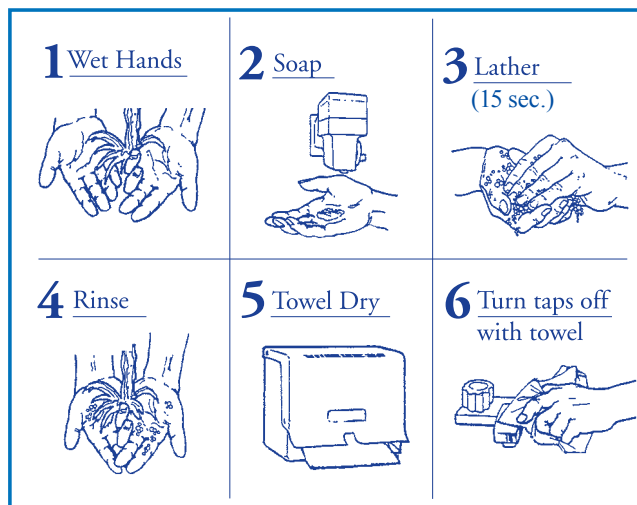
- Clean and disinfect toys and commonly used items such as door handles, countertops, etc.
- Avoid preparing and handling food until they have taken antibiotics for at least 24 hours. In addition, blisters must be covered if they have not crusted over.

Preventing Impetigo

There is no vaccine to prevent impetigo. The most effective method of preventing impetigo is frequent hand washing. Non-infected members of the household should pay special attention to areas of the skin that have been injured, such as cuts, scrapes, insect bites, areas of eczema and rashes. These areas should be kept clean and covered to prevent infection.

Treating Impetigo

Impetigo is treated with antibiotics and/or an antibiotic cream.



For further information, please call:
York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653
 TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit www.york.ca