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## SELF-CARE INFORMATION ON IMPETIGO

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Impetigo is a skin infection. It is usually caused by one of two bacteria (germs):

- Staphylococcus aureus
- Streptococcus Group A

These are found in the environment and on the surface of most people's skin. If you pick at sores or scratch itchy bites, you may cause bacteria to enter your skin and cause impetigo. Preschool and school age children are most affected and children with eczema are more at risk.

It is more common in the summer when the skin tends to get broken by cuts and insect bites.



### **What are the symptoms?**

The skin anywhere on the body can be affected but it is more common around the hands, nose, and mouth. Blisters form and over the next 4-6 days will burst, ooze fluid, and develop a honey-colour crust.

### **Can it be serious?**

Problems arise if the bacteria invade beyond the skin. This is very rare. Some of the organisms causing impetigo are more dangerous than others. For example, *Streptococcus pyogenes* which can affect the major organs.

### **How does it spread?**

It can be spread around the body by scratching the itchy skin. Impetigo can be most easily passed on to others when the skin is weeping. The infection can spread on clothing, towels, and bed linens that have touched infected skin. It can also be spread among friends and classmates who touch the weepy sores on the skin.

## What action is needed?

- Clean all sores and bites with antibacterial soap and water/ Encourage and supervise handwashing for children.
- Don't scratch or pick
- Cover infected areas of skin, if possible, with gauze and tape or a loose plastic bandage. This will help to keep your child from spreading impetigo to other parts of the body
- Fingernails should be kept short
- Keep the child's bed linens, towels, and clothing separate from those of other family members, and wash these items in hot water
- Ensure children do not share towels and eating utensils.
- If the doctor has prescribed antibiotics, they should not return to school or nursery until they have been on them for at least 2 days
- Poorly responsive or recurrent cases should be swabbed by your practice so the bacteria can be identified and checked for resistance to treatment.
- Avoid school/nursery until lesions are crusted /healed or 48 hours after starting antibiotic treatment.

## Medication

Impetigo is easy to treat and rarely causes any complications. It is usually treated with antiseptic or antibiotic ointment.

- Make sure that hands are washed with warm, soapy water after applying any ointment
- It may be helpful to wash areas of infected skin daily gently with clean gauze and antiseptic soap (available from any pharmacy)
- It is important to keep your skin clean and dry and avoid any further injury
- If the rash spreads, becomes more painful, or worsens in any other way, contact your GP

In severe cases where the impetigo has spread to many areas of the body, or the ointment isn't working the doctor may prescribe an antibiotic pill or liquid.

It can take up to 10 days for the skin to heal properly and the colour may not return to normal for some time after this.

## *Useful contacts*

- Ask your pharmacist
- Patient UK - [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)
- NHS Choices, [www.nhs.uk/conditions/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/)

### ***If you have further questions:***

Call the **practice** on *01285 653184 or 01285 653122*

If you require **urgent** medical advice, call *111 (24 Hrs)*

In an **emergency** call **999**