

Impetigo

Information

What is Impetigo?

Impetigo is a common and highly contagious skin infection that causes sores and blisters. It's not usually serious and often improves within a week of treatment or within a few weeks without treatment.

Two Types

Non-Bullous Impetigo (most common)



Bullous Impetigo



Signs & Symptoms

Non-Bullous Impetigo

- Symptoms begin with red sores – typically around the nose & mouth, but other areas of the face & body can be affected.
- The red sores burst, leaving thick golden crusts – can look like cornflakes.
- After the crusts dry, they leave a red mark that typically fades without scarring – this can take a few days to weeks to fade.
- The sores aren't painful, but they can be itchy.
- Other symptoms such as high temperature & swollen glands are rare.

Bullous Impetigo

- Symptoms begin with fluid-filled blisters (bullae) – typically between the waist & neck, or the limbs.
- The blisters may quickly spread, then burst a few days later sores burst, leaving thick golden crusts.
- After the crusts dry, they leave a red mark that fades without typically scarring – this can take a few days to weeks to fade.
- The blisters may be painful & the surrounding skin itchy.
- Other symptoms such as high temperature & swollen glands are more common.

***IMPORTANT* DO NOT SCRATCH THE SORES**

This will spread the infection to other parts of the body & other people

Causes of Impetigo

Impetigo occurs when the skin becomes infected with bacteria. The bacteria can infect the skin in two main ways:

1. Through a break in otherwise healthy skin – such as a cut, insect bite or other injury – this is known as primary impetigo
2. Through skin damaged by another underlying skin condition, such as head lice, scabies or eczema – this is known as secondary impetigo

As symptoms do not present until 4-10 days after initial exposure to the bacteria, it's often easily spread to others unintentionally.

Children and people with diabetes or a weakened immune system – either due to a condition such as HIV or a treatment such as chemotherapy – are most at risk of developing Impetigo.

THE BACTERIA CAN BE SPREAD EASILY THROUGH CLOSE CONTACT WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS THE INFECTION, SUCH AS THROUGH DIRECT PHYSICAL CONTACT, OR BY SHARING TOWELS.

Treatment

Impetigo usually gets better without treatment in around two to three weeks. However, treatment is often recommended because it can reduce the length of the illness to around 7-10 days and can lower the risk of the infection being spread to others.

The main treatments prescribed are **ANTIBIOTIC CREAMS** or **ANTIBIOTIC TABLETS**. These usually have to be used for around a week.



Prevention

During treatment, it's important to take precautions to minimise the risk of impetigo spreading to other people or to other areas of the body.

Most people are no longer contagious after **48 HOURS OF TREATMENT** or **ONCE THEIR SORES HAVE DRIED AND HEALED**. It's important to stay away from school or rugby training until this point.

1. Don't share flannels, sheets or towels with anyone with impetigo – wash them at a high temperature after use.
2. Wash the sores with soap and water and cover them loosely with a gauze bandage or clothing.
3. Avoid touching or scratching the sores, or letting others touch them.
4. Avoid contact with newborn babies, preparing food, playing contact sports, or going to the gym – until the risk of infection has passed
5. Wash your hands frequently – particularly after touching infected skin
6. If you think that the infection has spread to someone else, make sure they're seen by a pharmacist as soon as possible..

If you suspect your child has impetigo, take them to see their local pharmacist, school nurse or GP immediately.

For more information, see

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/impetigo#:~:text=Impetigo%20is%20a%20common%20and,affect%20people%20of%20all%20ages.>