

# Impetigo

## **What is Impetigo?**

Impetigo is a skin infection that can spread from one person to another. It appears as sores on the skin that are often covered by a thick dry honey-colored crust. The sores don't hurt, but may be tender if touched. They may also be itchy. Any skin area can be affected, however; it usually appears on the arms or legs, the face, and sometimes on the scalp.

## **What Causes Impetigo?**

Impetigo is usually caused by either streptococcus or staphylococcus bacteria, which are normally found on the skin and in the nose. When small cuts, scratches, or insect bites occur, these bacteria can get under the skin surface and cause infection. The infection is often reddish and puffy. Fluid or pus oozes from the sore for a few days. The fluid dries to form honey-colored crusts. As the bacteria multiply, the sores increase in number and size.

## **How is Impetigo Spread?**

Impetigo is very contagious. The bacteria are easily passed to new areas of the skin by scratching or touching the sore. It can be passed to other people by unwashed hands, dirty fingernails, and clothing or other objects that have touched the sores.

## **How to Treat Impetigo?**

First, and foremost, **children who may have impetigo should not attend school or daycare until they have seen a doctor, begun treatment, and are no longer infectious.** They should not sleep, play, or have close contact with other children until after they have been seen by a doctor.

While rarely serious, impetigo can sometimes lead to complications. It is important to see a doctor if sores on skins do not heal quickly or begin to spread. Oral antibiotics or antibiotic creams/ointments are usually prescribed to treat impetigo. Be sure to follow directions and keep infected areas clean.

## **How Can Impetigo be Prevented?**

- Bathe or shower daily with soap and water
- Wash hands regularly
- Always use your own person towel
- Keep fingernails short and clean
- Change and wash clothes frequently
- Keep infected children away from other children until treatment has begun and child is no longer infectious
- Do not let your children play, or have other close contact, with someone who may have impetigo
- If you or your children get a cut, scratch, or insect bite, wash the wound with soap and water, apply an antibiotic ointment, and cover the wound with a bandage. This will minimize the chance of bacterial infection.

**REMEMBER:** See a doctor if a cut, scratch, or insect bite fails to heal properly, gets larger and spreads, or develops a honey-colored crust. **It may be impetigo.**

Source: Texas Department of State Health Services - <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/impetigo/faqs/>

Additional Resource: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/impetigo/DS00464/>