

IMPETIGO

What is impetigo?

Impetigo is a common skin infection caused by bacteria that starts as small red, itchy spots that can appear anywhere on the body but are most often found on the face, around the nose, mouth, and sometimes on the arms and legs. These spots can be scaly or turn into blisters that break open and ooze, forming a honey-coloured crust.

Impetigo is very contagious, meaning it can easily spread from person to person. Scratching the sores can make the infection spread to other parts of the skin or to other people. Fortunately, it can be cleared up quickly with the right treatment.

Why does impetigo happen?

Impetigo happens when bacteria with names like *Staphylococcus aureus* or *Streptococcus pyogenes* enter the skin through small cuts, scratches, or insect bites. Kids who spend a lot of time in close contact with others, like at school or daycare may be at a higher risk of developing impetigo.

How is impetigo treated?

With proper treatment, impetigo usually clears up within a week. Without treatment, it may take longer to heal, and the infection can spread. If impetigo keeps coming back or lasts for more than a couple of weeks, it's important to see your doctor.

The good news is that impetigo is easy to treat. Here's what to do:

- **Clean the skin:** Gently wash the sores with warm water and soap to remove the crust.
- **Use topical antibiotics:** Your doctor might prescribe an antibiotic cream or ointment like mupirocin (Bactoban) or fusidic acid (Fucidin). Apply it directly to the sores as instructed.
- **Avoid spreading it:** Make sure to not scratch the sores. Keep your nails trimmed short and clean. Use a separate towel and wash it after each use. These strategies can also help you prevent impetigo.
- In more severe cases, your doctor might prescribe **oral antibiotics** such as cephalexin to clear the infection.
- Kids can return to school once they have been on treatment for 24 hours.

When to see your doctor again

If your child has a fever and is feeling unwell or if there is increasing redness, swelling or pain around the sores or if there is no improvement after a few days of treatment, make sure you see your doctor again.

