

Impetigo Fact Sheet

What is impetigo?

Impetigo is a common skin infection in young children. It is caused by streptococcal or staphylococcal bacteria. Although common in children, impetigo can occur in people of any age.

What does the rash look like?

The rash looks red and round, and may be oozing. It can occur as small blisters containing pus-like material that may break and form a flat, honey-colored crust. That rash is most commonly seen on the face and diaper area, but it can occur any place on the skin. The rash is often itchy.

How do you get impetigo?

Impetigo is spread through direct contact with infected skin. Less commonly it can spread through touching articles such as clothing, bedding, towels, etc. contaminated by contact with the rash.

Is there any treatment for impetigo?

Topical treatments and/or antibiotics are available to treat impetigo. See your doctor. Untreated streptococcal impetigo may result in a complication called nephritis. Nephritis is a serious and possibly deadly kidney disease, which may be prevented by antibiotics.

A person with impetigo should:

- Wash the rash with soap and water and cover it loosely with gauze, a bandage, or clothing.
- Wash hands thoroughly, especially after touching an infected area of the body.
- Use separate towels and washcloths.
- Avoid contact with newborn babies.
- Stay home from school or child care until 24 hours after the first dose of antibiotics is taken, or otherwise cleared by a health care provider (whichever is longer).
- Do not handle food until 24 hours after the first dose of antibiotics is taken, or otherwise cleared by a health care provider (whichever is longer).