

IMPETIGO

Impetigo is a very common skin infection caused by either the streptococcal or staphylococcal bacteria. It usually affects children, and it appears more frequently in warm weather. Impetigo usually begins as an infected cut or scrape, or any break in the skin. Yellow crusty scabs that vary in size develop, especially in warm moist areas of the body (diaper area, armpits, around the nose and mouth), commonly in the summer and following a cold. Impetigo is contagious. Children spread the infection by touch from one to another. You must try to prevent your child from scratching, which can spread it. If left untreated the scabs may scar. Rarely, even with treatment, inflammation of the kidney may result causing blood in the urine several weeks later.

Personal hygiene does not affect a child's likelihood of developing impetigo. Nor should impetigo be viewed as an indication of an unclean child.

Treatment:

- An office visit is required so that we may judge the severity of the infection and plan a course of treatment
- All sheets, towels and clothes used by the child must be disinfected in very hot water.
- Oral antibiotics or a prescription cream or ointment may be needed if the case is more than mild.
- It is important to continue antibiotic therapy for the full course of treatment, even if the lesions seem to heal before your prescription is used up. Once treatment is started, it is far less likely the infection will spread.
- Impetigo lesions should be washed with a mild soap in the morning and evening. *Gentle* washing will usually be enough to remove the crusts; vigorous washing can delay healing and does not prevent the spread of the infection.
- If thick crusts are present, apply a warm, wet compress for five to ten minutes, morning and evening, and this should be enough to remove the crust.
- Usually there is no need for any dressing over the lesions, unless a young child persists in scratching them, or if they are located where clothing may chafe them. In such cases a gauze dressing covering the spot may be used. However, the rash must be kept completely covered for the child to attend school. If left uncovered the child should not attend school until at least 2 days after starting treatment.

Promote Healing:

Helping your child understand what "contagious" means and how to avoid spreading infection is an important part of promoting rapid healing. Encourage your child not to touch his lesions, to wash his hands if they do, and not to touch other children; not to share towels, washcloths, clothing and linens until the infection disappears completely.