

What Is Impetigo?

Impetigo is a skin infection caused by a bacteria.

What Does It Look Like?

Impetigo usually begins with small blisters or sores on the face, near the corners of the mouth and nose, or on ears or hands. It can start anywhere there is a break in the skin, such as a cut, sore or insect bite. Impetigo sores are itchy and last longer than an ordinary sore or pimple. They may ooze a honey-coloured fluid and form a yellowish crust when they scab over.

How Does Impetigo Spread?

Impetigo is spread by direct contact with an infected person or with items that have been in contact with the fluid from impetigo sores. Impetigo can also be spread by using towels, clothing or other personal articles used by someone with impetigo. Some types of impetigo are very contagious and will spread quickly unless treated at once.

How Can I Prevent It?

Good personal cleanliness is the best way to prevent impetigo.

- **Wash hands frequently.** This is important whether or not someone in the family has impetigo. Help everyone in your family to get into the habit of washing their hands often.
- **Wash small cuts, scratches and bites** and keep them covered.
- **Avoid direct contact** with anyone who might have impetigo.
- **Check for signs of impetigo** and seek treatment quickly.

What Should I Do If My Child Gets It?

- **See a doctor** if you think your child has impetigo. The doctor will make sure that the sores really are impetigo and prescribe treatment. Impetigo is usually treated with an ointment or with medicine taken by mouth.

- **Remove crusts and scabs** by soaking them in warm water and gently washing with soap and water. Then apply the ointment the doctor has prescribed. Repeat this two or three times a day until the sores are healed. Throw away the cloths you use to scrub the sores.
- **Cover the sores with bandages.** This will help keep children from scratching and keep the fluids from the sores away from others. Throw bandages away when you remove them.
- **Wash anything that is touched** by the fluid from the sores.
- **Give each person in the family their own separate soap, towels and washcloths.** It's especially important to keep personal articles used by the infected person away from those used by other family members.
- **Notify your child's school.** Your child may have caught impetigo at school and other parents need to be on the lookout for it.



If My Child Gets Impetigo, When Can He or She Go Back to School?

The doctor will tell you when your child can return to school. Check with your school to find out what their policy is on when children can return to school.

Who Can I Contact for Information on Impetigo?

Do not try to diagnose impetigo by yourself. Call your family doctor or contact the Public Health nurse at your local Public Health Services Office.

Public Health Services

Amherst:	667-3319 or 1-800-767-3319
Antigonish:	863-2743
Bridgewater:	543-0850
Dartmouth:	481-5800
New Glasgow:	752-5151
Sydney:	563-2400
Truro:	893-5820
Wolfville:	542-6310
Yarmouth:	742-7141

Public Health Services



www.gov.ns.ca/hpp

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for Parents
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