



**Impetigo** is a skin infection that can easily be spread to others, which means that it is very contagious. It is caused by staphylococcal or group A streptococcal bacteria, which is the most common bacterial skin infection in children. In general, impetigo is a mild infection that can occur anywhere on the body. Health care providers treat impetigo with antibiotics.

## Who can get Impetigo?



Anyone can get impetigo; however, it is the most common bacterial infection among children aged 2 to 5 years.

## What are the Signs and Symptoms of Impetigo?

- Symptoms include red, itchy, blister-like sores or rash.
- Sores can occur anywhere but are commonly found on the arms, legs, mouth, nose, or in diapered children, in the diaper area.
- Next, a crusty yellow or “honey-colored” scab forms over the sore, which then heals without leaving a scar.



**red, itchy, blister-like sores or rash**



**blisters and rash around nose and lips**



## What are the Risk Factors for Impetigo?

Anyone can get impetigo, but some factors increase the risk of getting this infection.

- **Age**  
Impetigo is most common in children aged 2 through 5 years old.
- **Infections or injuries that break the skin**  
People with scabies are at increased risk for impetigo.  
Participating in activities where cuts and scrapes are common.
- **Close contact**  
Spending time near another person with impetigo is the most common risk factor.
- **Crowded conditions can increase the risk of spread**  
This includes childcare centers, schools, detention or correctional facilities, homeless shelters, and military training facilities.
- **Climate**  
Impetigo bacteria can occur anywhere, but is more common in places with hot, humid summers and mild winters (subtropics), or wet and dry seasons (tropics).
- **Poor personal hygiene**  
Lack of proper handwashing, body washing, and facial cleanliness can increase risk.



## What are the Complications of Impetigo?

Adults are at higher risk than children for complications of impetigo. Complications are rare but include cellulitis, kidney problems, and scarring.

## How is Impetigo Spread?

The bacteria that cause impetigo can be transmitted to others through contact with skin lesions. The bacteria can also be transmitted through other objects or materials, such as bedding or toys. The bacteria can be spread by scratching the blisters and touching other parts of the body.

Symptoms usually appear within 4 to 10 days after contact with someone who has impetigo.

A person is considered infectious (and can spread the disease to others) until **24 hours after** the start of antibiotic treatment or until the lesions have crusted and are no longer draining.

## How is Impetigo Diagnosed?

A diagnosis of impetigo is usually based on a patient's history and a health care provider's examination of the rash. Laboratory tests can be used to confirm the presence of the bacteria; however, lab tests are not necessary nor routinely performed in clinical care.

## How is Impetigo Treated?

Impetigo is treated with antibiotics prescribed by a health care provider. They can be topical antibiotics (medicine rubbed onto the sores) or oral antibiotics (medicine taken by mouth), typically depending on the number of sores. It is important to follow the health care provider's instructions when taking the medication, even if you start to feel better.

### What can you do?

#### To prevent impetigo:



- Clean and cover skin injuries



- Practice good hygiene such as regular hand washing, bathing and/or showering

#### If you have impetigo:

- Regularly wash your hands;
- Use a clean towel or fresh paper towel to dry the body or hands;
- Wash clothes and linens in hot water;
- Keep fingernails short;
- Clean surfaces in the home with antibacterial products;
- Do not share personal hygiene items;
- Take antibiotics, if prescribed



### Should a Child with Impetigo be Excluded from School or Childcare?

A child (or an adult who has contact with children) should be [excluded](#) from school or childcare until 24 hours after starting appropriate treatment.



**Scan the code** to learn more about [28 Pa. Code § 27.71. Exclusion of children, and staff having contact with children, for specified diseases and infectious conditions.](#)

#### **This fact sheet provides general information.**

- Please contact your health care provider for specific clinical information.
- If you have any questions:  
contact us at **1-877-PA-Health (877-724-3258)**.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

CDC: [About Impetigo](#) | [Group A Strep](#) | [CDC](#)