

Impetigo

Impetigo is a very common skin infection in young children. It occurs when bacteria invade the skin that is broken, irritated, scratched or burned. The areas most often affected are the hands and face, especially around the nose and mouth.

Impetigo is contagious and can be spread by the hands or direct contact with the lesions to different parts of the body or to other children. The infection can also be spread by clothes or towels that have been contaminated by open sores.

Impetigo usually begins as red spots, which fill with fluid (blisters). The blisters rupture easily, and the fluid dries and forms a honey-colored crust. Sometimes the blisters do not rupture or they rupture without forming crusts, producing a raw, reddened area instead. Impetigo does not cause fever.

Impetigo may be treated with an antibiotic ointment, antibiotics that are taken by mouth or both. When applying an ointment, first remove the crusts with gentle washing and soaking. To prevent spread, make sure that persons who have contact with the sores wash their hands well with soap and water. Affected children should have their own wash cloths and towels. They should not return to school or day-care until twenty-four hours after treatment is begun.

If you suspect impetigo, keep your child at home and contact your physician.