

Discharge Instructions for Cellulitis



You have been diagnosed with cellulitis. This is an infection in the deepest layers of the skin. The infection may even spread to the muscle in some cases. Cellulitis is caused by bacteria. The bacteria can enter the body through broken skin. This can happen with a cut, scratch, animal bite, or an insect bite that has been scratched. You may have been treated in the hospital with antibiotics and fluids. You will likely be given a prescription for antibiotics to take at home. This sheet will help you take care of yourself at home.

Home care

When you are home:

- Take the prescribed antibiotic medicine you are given as directed until it is gone. Take it even if you feel better. It treats the infection and stops it from returning. Not taking all the medicine can make future infections hard to treat.
- Keep the infected area clean. Follow all wound care instructions from your healthcare provider.
- When possible, raise the infected area above the level of your heart. This helps keep swelling down.
- Mark the boundary of the infected area so you can tell if it is growing.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you are in pain. Ask what kind of over-the-counter medicine you can take for pain.
- Apply clean bandages as advised. Dispose of dirty bandages in a plastic bag that is tied at the top.
- Wash your hands often to prevent spreading the infection. Always wash your hands before and after cleaning the area. If anyone helps you with your care, have them do the same.
- Take your temperature once a day for a week.

In the future, wash your hands before and after you touch cuts, scratches, or bandages. This will help prevent infection.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following:

- The infection does not get better within 1 to 2 days after treatment starts
- Trouble or pain when moving the joints above or below the infected area
- Discharge or pus draining from the area
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Pain that gets worse in or around the infected
- Redness that gets worse in or around the infected area, particularly if the area of redness expands to a wider area
- Shaking chills
- Swelling of the infected area
- Vomiting

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