

# IMPETIGO FACT SHEET

## What is Impetigo?

Impetigo (also known as pyoderma) is caused by *Streptococcus pyogenes* or group A *Streptococcus* (group A strep) and *Staphylococcus aureus*. Impetigo is a skin infection that is highly contagious.

## Who can get Impetigo?

It is the most common bacterial infection in children; however, impetigo can occur in individuals of any age.

## What are the symptoms of Impetigo?

Impetigo appears as a blistery rash. When the blisters open, they produce a thick, golden-yellow discharge that dries, crusts, and adheres to the skin. It commonly occurs on the face (around the mouth and the nose) or diaper area but can occur anywhere on the body. The palms and soles are spared.

## How soon do symptoms of Impetigo appear?

Symptoms usually appear within four to ten days after contact with someone who has impetigo.

## How is Impetigo spread?

Impetigo is spread from person to person through direct contact with the discharge from the blisters. This infection can rapidly spread among persons in close contact, such as children in a daycare facility. There is risk of spread by touching items contaminated with drainage from the blisters such as towels, washcloths, etc.

## How Impetigo is diagnosed?

Impetigo is diagnosed by physical examen. However, the provider will collect the exudate or pus from an impetigo lesion for gram stain or culture to identify the bacterial cause. But laboratory testing is not necessary nor routinely performed in clinical practice.

## How is Impetigo treated?

Impetigo is treated with antibiotics prescribed by a health care provider. It is important to take the full course of the antibiotics as prescribed even when one starts feeling better. Untreated streptococcal impetigo may result in a complication called post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis.

## How can people protect themselves against Impetigo?

The following steps can prevent the spread of impetigo:

- Wash the rash with soap and running water, cover it loosely with gauze or a bandage
- Thorough hand washing is necessary after touching infected areas of the body
- Avoid contact with newborn babies
- Wash the infected individual's clothes, linens, and towels at least once a day and never share them with others.
- Do not bathe a child with impetigo with another child.
- Wear gloves while applying any antibiotic ointment that a physician may recommend, and wash your hands afterwards.

**Should a child with Impetigo be excluded from child-care or school?** A child with impetigo should be excluded from child-care or school until there is no drainage from the blister rash, and if treated with oral antibiotics until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.

## Where can I get more information?

Information about impetigo and other related health topics can be found at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit [www.dchealth.dc.gov](http://www.dchealth.dc.gov) or call (202) 442-9371.

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