



[Home](#) → [Medical Encyclopedia](#) → Erysipelas

URL of this page: [//medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000618.htm](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000618.htm)

# Erysipelas

Erysipelas is a type of skin infection. It affects the outermost layer of the skin and the local lymph nodes.

## Causes

Erysipelas is usually caused by group A streptococcus bacteria. The condition may affect both children and adults.

Some conditions that can lead to erysipelas are:

- A cut in the skin
- Problems with drainage through the veins or lymph system
- Skin sores (ulcers)

## Symptoms

The infection occurs on the legs or arms most of the time. It may also occur on the face and trunk.

Symptoms of erysipelas may include:

- Fever and chills
- Skin sore with a sharp raised border. As the infection spreads, the skin is painful, very red, swollen, and warm. Blisters on the skin can form.

## Exams and Tests

Erysipelas is diagnosed based on how the skin looks. A biopsy or other tests of the skin are usually not needed.

## Treatment

Antibiotics are used to get rid of the infection. If the infection is severe, antibiotics may need to be given through an intravenous (IV) line.

People who have repeated episodes of erysipelas may benefit from long-term antibiotics.

## Outlook (Prognosis)

With treatment, the outcome is good. It may take a few weeks for the skin to return to normal. Peeling is common as the skin heals.

## Possible Complications

Sometimes the bacteria that cause erysipelas may travel to the blood. This results in a condition called bacteremia. When this happens, the infection may spread to the heart valves, joints, and bones.

Other complications include:

- Return of infection
- Septic shock (a dangerous body-wide infection)

## When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your health care provider if you have a skin sore or other symptoms of erysipelas.

## Prevention

Keep your skin healthy by avoiding dry skin and preventing cuts and scrapes. This may reduce the risk for erysipelas.

## Alternative Names

Strep infection - erysipelas; Streptococcal infection - erysipelas; Cellulitis - erysipelas

## References

Bryant AE, Stevens DL. *Streptococcus pyogenes*. In: Bennett JE, Dolin R, Blaser MJ, eds. *Mandell, Douglas, and Bennett's Principles and Practice of Infectious Diseases*. 9th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2020:chap 197.

Dinulos JGH. Bacterial infections. In: Dinulos JGH, ed. *Habif's Clinical Dermatology*. 7th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2021:chap 9.

McLarney RM, Sommer LL, Reboli AC, Heymann WR. Bacterial diseases. In: Bolognia JL, Schaffer JV, Cerroni L, eds. *Dermatology*. 5th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2025:chap 74.

## Review Date 10/13/2024

Updated by: Ramin Fathi, MD, FAAD, Director, Phoenix Surgical Dermatology Group, Phoenix, AZ. Also reviewed by David C. Dugdale, MD, Medical Director, Brenda Conaway, Editorial Director, and the A.D.A.M. Editorial team.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)



A.D.A.M., Inc. is accredited by URAC, for Health Content Provider ([www.urac.org](http://www.urac.org)). URAC's [accreditation program](#) is an independent audit to verify that A.D.A.M. follows rigorous standards of quality and accountability. A.D.A.M. is among the first to achieve this important distinction for online health information and services. Learn more about A.D.A.M.'s [editorial policy](#), [editorial process](#), and [privacy policy](#).

The information provided herein should not be used during any medical emergency or for the diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. A licensed medical professional should be consulted for diagnosis and treatment of any and all medical conditions. Links to other sites are provided for information only – they do not constitute endorsements of those other sites. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, reliability, timeliness, or correctness of any translations made by a third-party service of the information provided herein into any other language. © 1997-2025 A.D.A.M., a business unit of Ebix, Inc. Any duplication or distribution of the information contained herein is strictly prohibited.



---

National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
National Institutes of Health