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Skin Infections

What are skin infections?

Your skin is your body's largest organ. It has many different functions, including covering and protecting your body. It helps keep germs out. But sometimes the germs can cause a skin infection. It often happens when the germs enter your body through a break, cut, or wound on your skin. Other skin infections can happen in places where the skin rubs together, especially if the area is moist. Infections can also happen when you have a poor blood supply to an area of your body or if your immune system is weakened because of another disease or a medical treatment.

Some skin infections cover a small area on the top of your skin. Other infections can go deep into your skin or spread to a larger area.

What causes skin infections?

Skin infections are caused by different kinds of germs. For example,:

- Bacteria cause cellulitis [<https://medlineplus.gov/cellulitis.html>] , impetigo [<https://medlineplus.gov/impetigo.html>] , and staphylococcal (staph) infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/staphylococcalinfections.html>]
- Viruses cause shingles [<https://medlineplus.gov/shingles.html>] , warts [<https://medlineplus.gov/warts.html>] , and herpes simplex [<https://medlineplus.gov/herpessimplex.html>]
- Fungi cause athlete's foot [<https://medlineplus.gov/athletesfoot.html>] and yeast infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/yeastinfections.html>]
- Parasites cause body lice [<https://medlineplus.gov/bodylice.html>] , head lice [<https://medlineplus.gov/headlice.html>] , and scabies [<https://medlineplus.gov/scabies.html>]

Who is more likely to get a skin infection?

You are more likely to get a skin infection if you:

- Have poor circulation
- Have diabetes [<https://medlineplus.gov/diabetes.html>]
- Are older
- Have an immune system disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/immunesystemanddisorders.html>] , such as HIV [<https://medlineplus.gov/hiv.html>]
- Have a weakened immune system because of chemotherapy [<https://medlineplus.gov/cancerchemotherapy.html>] or other medicines that suppress your immune system
- Have to stay in one position for a long time, such as if you are sick and have to stay in bed for a long time or you are paralyzed [<https://medlineplus.gov/paralysis.html>]
- Are malnourished [<https://medlineplus.gov/malnutrition.html>]
- Have excessive skinfolds, which can happen if you have obesity [<https://medlineplus.gov/obesity.html>]

What are the symptoms of skin infections?

The symptoms depend on the type of infection. Some symptoms that are common to many skin infections include rashes [<https://medlineplus.gov/rashes.html>] , swelling, redness, pain, pus, and itching [<https://medlineplus.gov/itching.html>] .

How are skin infections diagnosed?

To diagnose a skin infection, your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask about your symptoms. You may have lab tests, such as a skin culture. This is a test to identify what type of infection you have, using a sample from your skin. Your provider may take the sample by swabbing or scraping your skin or removing a small piece of skin (biopsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/biopsy.html>]). Sometimes providers use other tests, such as blood tests.

How are skin infections treated?

The treatment depends on the type of infection and how serious it is. Some infections will go away on their own. When you do need treatment, it may include a cream or lotion to put on the skin. Other possible treatments include medicines and a procedure to drain pus.

Start Here

- Overview of Bacterial Skin Infections [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/home/skin-disorders/bacterial-skin-infections/overview-of-bacterial-skin-infections>] (Merck & Co., Inc.)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/es-us/hogar/trastornos-de-la-piel/infecciones-bacterianas-de-la-piel/introducci%C3%B3n-a-las-infecciones-bacterianas-de-la-piel>]
- Overview of Fungal Skin Infections [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/home/skin-disorders/fungal-skin-infections/overview-of-fungal-skin-infections>] (Merck & Co., Inc.)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.merckmanuals.com/es-us/hogar/trastornos-de-la-piel/infecciones-f%C3%BAngicas-de-la-piel/introducci%C3%B3n-a-las-infecciones-f%C3%BAngicas-de-la-piel>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Rash Evaluation [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/rash-evaluation/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/evaluacion-de-sarpullido/>]
- Skin Biopsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/skin-biopsy/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/biopsia-de-piel/>]
- Skin Rashes and Other Skin Problems [<https://familydoctor.org/symptom/skin-rashes-skin-problems/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/sintoma/erupciones-de-cutaneas-leves-y-otros-cambios-en-el-piel/?adfree=true>]
- Wood's Lamp Examination [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/woods-lamp-examination/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)

Related Issues

- Diabetes and Skin Complications [<https://diabetes.org/about-diabetes/complications/skin-complications>] (American Diabetes Association)
- Molluscum Contagiosum in Schools, Daycares, and Pools [<https://www.cdc.gov/molluscum-contagiosum/special-environments/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Safely Treating Molluscum, a Common Skin Condition [<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/safely-treating-molluscum-common-skin-condition>] (Food and Drug Administration)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/articulos-para-el-consumidor-en-espanol/el-tratamiento-seguro-del-molusco-una-afección-común-de-la-piel>]

Specifics

- About Necrotizing Fasciitis [<https://www.cdc.gov/group-a-strep/about/necrotizing-fasciitis.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/group-a-strep/es/about/acerca-de-la-fascitis-necrosante.html>]
- About Onchocerciasis [<https://www.cdc.gov/filarial-worms/about/onchocerciasis.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Blastomycosis Basics [<https://www.cdc.gov/blastomycosis/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Boils [<https://www.aocd.org/page/Boils?>] (American Osteopathic College of Dermatology)

- Boils and Carbuncles [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/boils-and-carbuncles/symptoms-causes/syc-20353770?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/boils-and-carbuncles/symptoms-causes/syc-20353770?p=1>]
- Cutaneous Larva Migrans [<https://www.aocd.org/page/CutaneousLarvaMigr?>] (American Osteopathic College of Dermatology)
- Erysipelas [<https://www.aocd.org/page/Erysipelas?>] (American Osteopathic College of Dermatology)
- Erythema Nodosum [<https://www.aocd.org/page/ErythemaNodosum?>] (American Osteopathic College of Dermatology)
- Intertrigo [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/intertrigo/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)

Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/intertrigo-es/?adfree=true>]
- Molluscum Contagiosum [<https://www.cdc.gov/molluscum-contagiosum/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Molluscum Contagiosum: Overview [<https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/a-z/molluscum-contagiosum-overview?NoAds>] (American Academy of Dermatology)
- Skin Infections in Athletes [<https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/diseases--conditions/skin-infections-in-athletes/>] (American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons)
- Sporotrichosis Basics [<https://www.cdc.gov/sporotrichosis/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Tinea Versicolor [<https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/a-z/tinea-versicolor-overview?NoAds>] (American Academy of Dermatology)
- Tinea Versicolor [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/tinea-versicolor/symptoms-causes/syc-20378385?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/tinea-versicolor/symptoms-causes/syc-20378385?p=1>]

Images

- Boils (Furunculosis) [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/furunculosis-boil/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- Erythema Nodosum [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/erythema-nodosum/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- Erythrasma [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/erythrasma/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- Intertrigo [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/intertrigo/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- Molluscum Contagiosum [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/molluscum-contagiosum/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)
- Tinea Versicolor [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/tinea-versicolor/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Molluscum Contagiosum [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Molluscum+Contagiosum%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Skin Diseases, Infectious [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Skin+Diseases,+Infectious%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Reducing Hospitalisations With a Skin and Soft Tissue Infection Clinic. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40235232>]
- Article: In vitro and preclinical evaluation of the antifungal activity of 6-methoxy-1 H-indole-2-carboxylic... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40169999>]
- Article: [Translated article] Wood's Light in Inflammatory and Autoimmune Dermatoses, Infections and... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/39722344>]
- Skin Infections -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Skin+Diseases%2C+Infectious%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D>]

Find an Expert

- American Academy of Dermatology [<https://www.aad.org/?NoAds>]
- Find a Dermatologist [<https://find-a-derm.aad.org/>] (American Academy of Dermatology)
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/>] 

Children

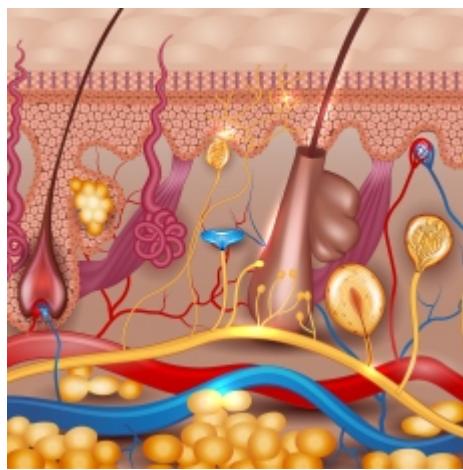
- Molluscum Contagiosum [<https://www.aapos.org/glossary/molluscum-contagiosum>] (American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus)
- Molluscum Contagiosum (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/molluscum-contagiosum.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/molluscum-contagiosum.html>]

Teenagers

- Cuts, Scratches, and Scrapes [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/cuts.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/cuts.html>]
- Molluscum Contagiosum [<https://youngwomenshealth.org/guides/molluscum-contagiosum/>] (Boston Children's Hospital)
Also in Spanish [<https://youngwomenshealth.org/guias/molusco-contagioso/>]

Patient Handouts

- Blastomycosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000102.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000102.htm>]
- Boils [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001474.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001474.htm>]
- Candida infection of the skin [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000880.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000880.htm>]
- Carbuncle [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000825.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000825.htm>]
- Donovanosis (granuloma inguinale) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000636.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000636.htm>]
- Ecthyma [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000864.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000864.htm>]
- Erysipelas [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000618.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000618.htm>]
- Molluscum contagiosum [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000826.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000826.htm>]
- Necrotizing soft tissue infection [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001443.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001443.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Actinomycosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000599.htm>]

Blastomycosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000102.htm>]

Boils [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001474.htm>]

Candida infection of the skin [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000880.htm>]

Carbuncle [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000825.htm>]

Donovanosis (granuloma inguinale) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000636.htm>]

Ecthyma [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000864.htm>]

Erysipelas [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000618.htm>]

Erythema multiforme [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000851.htm>]

Erythema nodosum [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000881.htm>]

Erythrasma [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001470.htm>]

Gram stain of skin lesion [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003760.htm>]

Intertrigo [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003223.htm>]

Molluscum contagiosum [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000826.htm>]

Necrotizing soft tissue infection [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001443.htm>]

Nikolsky sign [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003285.htm>]

Paronychia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001444.htm>]

Scalded skin syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001352.htm>]

Skin lesion aspiration [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003451.htm>]

Skin lesion biopsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003840.htm>]

Skin lesion KOH exam [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003761.htm>]

Skin lesion of blastomycosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000865.htm>]

Skin or nail culture [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003762.htm>]

Sporotrichosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001338.htm>]

Swimming pool granuloma [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001357.htm>]

Tinea versicolor [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001465.htm>]

Related Health Topics

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National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Skin Infections* is the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases [<http://www.niams.nih.gov/>]

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