

Impetigo

(School sores)

Impetigo is the name given to sores on the skin that are infected with common germs. They're usually scabbed over and often contain pus.

Causes

Impetigo happens when a germ (either *Streptococcus A* or *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria) gets into a cut, scratch or sore on your child's skin. Because the skin's broken, it can't serve as a barrier against the germs. The germs 'feed' on the wound and stop it from getting better. They also spread to other parts of the body.

Symptoms

In the early stages of impetigo, all you might notice are blisters or red spots on a part of your child's body. These spots are especially common around the face, hands and legs.

The spots might fill up with pus and scab over. The scabs are usually yellow-green or gold in colour. They soon increase in number and size if they aren't treated quickly. Impetigo is usually itchy.

The infected sores can spread rapidly to other parts of the body and are also **highly contagious**.

When to see your doctor

You should see your doctor if:

- a sore on your child's body is surrounded by an area of red skin
- your child is also generally unwell or has a [fever](#)
- you think your child has impetigo.

Tests

If treatment isn't going well, your doctor might suggest taking a swab of the infected area and sending it to pathology. This can identify both the germ and the antibiotic most likely to be effective against it.

Treatment

If the impetigo sore is small without blistering, applying an antibiotic cream and paying close attention to skin hygiene and handwashing can prevent spread and allow the sore to heal.

Most cases of impetigo need a prescribed medication, either mupirocin ointment or antibiotic medicines.

In between putting the ointment on your child's skin, wash the skin gently with soap or an antibacterial solution, and pat dry. Also try to remove the crusts from your child's skin, by soaking her in the bath for 20–30 minutes. This will soften the scabs. You can then wipe away the crust with a towel.

Prevention

Impetigo can spread rapidly to other parts of the body if your child touches the sore and then scratches somewhere else. Explain this to your child, and encourage his not to pick at the sores.

Keep your child's fingernails short and wash her hands often, until the infection has cleared up.

Use separate towels for different areas of impetigo, but don't use these towels to dry unaffected areas of

your child's body. Wash all towels and bed linen thoroughly if they've come into contact with blood, pus or any sores. Wash any bites, cuts, grazes or areas of eczema carefully and keep them clean. These can be points of entry for the germs that cause impetigo.

Impetigo is highly contagious. Keep your child home from child care or school until you've started treating your child with antibiotics and all the sores are covered with watertight dressings.



Create PDF



Print



Email

Rated

★★★★★ (12) ratings

Last updated or reviewed

12-09-2012
