

# Parent Resources

## Impetigo: One of the Most Common Skin Infections in Children

In the United States, approximately 9-10 percent of all children who go to clinics with skin complaints have impetigo. Although this contagious bacterial infection is most common in children, adults can also become infected. Impetigo usually attacks the area around the nose and mouth, but it may affect skin anywhere on the body.

Children spread impetigo from one area of the body to another when they touch themselves with fingers that have been in contact with scratched, infected skin. The infection may spread to other household members on clothing, towels and bed linens that have touched infected skin. Impetigo could also spread among playmates or classmates who come in contact with infected skin.

Look for areas of itchy skin with tiny blisters, especially around your child's mouth and nose. Blisters will eventually burst to reveal areas of red skin that might seep fluid. A tan or yellowish-brown crust will gradually cover the affected area, making it look as if coated with honey or brown sugar.

Impetigo is usually treated with oral antibiotics or, in mild cases, antibiotic creams or ointment used directly on the infected areas. Healing should begin within three days of starting treatment. A child with impetigo may return to school once the infection cannot be spread to classmates (usually 24 hours after treatment begins).

You can help prevent impetigo by following good hygiene practices when caring for your child's skin. This includes either a daily shower or a bath with soap and water.

### If Someone in Your Family Has Impetigo

- Make sure the infected person's fingernails are cut short, and cover impetigo sores with gauze and tape to prevent scratching and spreading the infection to other areas.
- Prevent the infection from spreading to other family members by using antibacterial soap and frequent hand-washing.
- Make sure each family member uses a separate towel and washcloth.
- If necessary, substitute paper towels for cloth towels for a while.

Call your pediatrician if your child has signs of impetigo, especially if he or she has been exposed to a family member or classmate with the infection. Once your child is being treated, call your doctor if a fever develops or if your child's skin does not begin to heal after three days of treatment.



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