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IMPETIGO

What is IMPETIGO?

- Impetigo is topical infection of the skin caused by bacteria.
- The most common sites of involvement are the face (particularly around the nose and mouth) and the legs. Lesions may occur in other locations.
- Impetigo occurs most commonly in children.
- Impetigo may spread easily through close contact, especially among siblings, daycare centers, and schools.
- Crowding, poor hygiene, contact sports, and neglected minor skin trauma all contribute to spread.
- Impetigo tends to occur during warmer months and is more common in semitropical or tropical climates than in cooler regions.
- Impetigo occurs in two classic forms: nonbullous and bullous.
- The nonbullous form is more common, accounting for approximately 70% of cases.

Causes of IMPETIGO

- Impetigo is caused by bacteria. (Group A streptococci and occasionally by other streptococci or by *Staph aureus*)
- Minor trauma may serve to inoculate organisms into the skin. Studies have shown that colonization of the skin is uncommon. Chicken pox, abrasions, lacerations and burns are common predisposing factors.

Symptoms of IMPETIGO

- The lesions caused by impetigo are generally not painful and systemic signs of infection are not present.
- Impetigo manifests initially as small, fluid-filled vesicles. These lesions then rapidly develop into pus-filled vesicles that readily rupture. The discharge of these lesions dries to form the characteristic golden-yellow "honey-like" crusts.
- Itching is common and scratching of the lesions may further spread infection.

Treatment of IMPETIGO

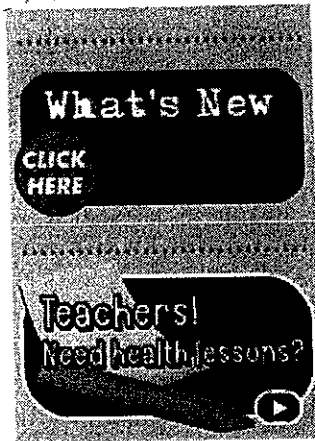
- The goal of therapy is aimed at rapid eradication of the infection.
- Removal of crusts by soaking in soap and warm water is helpful in symptomatic relief.
- Prescription antibiotics active against suspected or isolated pathogens for 7-10 days is the curative treatment.
- Topical therapy has been shown effective in localized disease, but disseminated infections may require systemic antibiotics. (prescription only)

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spread the infection by scratching it and then touching other parts of the body.

Impetigo is contagious and can spread to anyone who comes into contact with infected skin or other items, such as clothing, towels, and bed linens, that have been touched by infected skin.

Treatment

When it just affects small areas of the skin, impetigo can usually be treated with antibiotic ointment. But if the infection has spread to many areas of the body, or the ointment isn't working, your child's doctor may prescribe an antibiotic pill or liquid.

Once antibiotic treatment begins, healing should start within a few days. It's important to make sure that your child takes the medication as the doctor has prescribed it. If that doesn't happen, a deeper skin infection or a blood infection could develop.

While the infection is healing, gently wash the areas of infected skin with clean gauze and antiseptic soap every day. Soak any areas of crusted skin in warm soapy water to help remove the layers of crust (it is not necessary to completely remove all of it).

To keep your child from spreading impetigo to other parts of the body, your child's doctor or nurse will probably recommend covering infected areas of skin with gauze and tape or a loose plastic bandage. Keep your child's fingernails short and clean.

Prevention

Good hygiene practices, such as regular hand washing, can help prevent impetigo. Use soap and water to clean your child's skin and be sure your child takes baths or showers regularly. Pay special attention to areas of the skin that have been injured, such as cuts, scrapes, bug bites, areas of eczema, and rashes caused by allergic reactions or poison ivy. Keep these areas clean and covered.

Make sure that anyone in your family with impetigo keeps his or her fingernails cut short and that the impetigo sores are covered with gauze and tape.

Prevent impetigo infection from spreading among family members by using antibacterial soap and making sure that each family member uses a separate towel. If necessary, substitute paper towels for cloth ones until the impetigo is gone. Separate the infected person's bed linens, towels, and clothing from those of other family members, and wash these items in hot water.

When to Call Your Child's Doctor

Call your child's doctor if your child has signs of impetigo, especially if he or she has been exposed to a family member or classmate with the infection. If your child is already being treated