

Impetigo Fact Sheet

Impetigo is a common skin infection in young children

It is caused by streptococcal or staphylococcal bacteria. Although common in children, impetigo can occur in people of any age.

A rash appears 4 to 10 days after exposure

The rash looks red and round, and may be oozing. It can occur as small blisters containing pus-like material that may break and form a flat, honey-colored crust. The rash is most commonly seen on the face and diaper area, but can occur any place on the skin. The rash is often itchy.

Impetigo is spread through direct contact with infected skin

Less commonly it can be spread through touching articles (such as clothing, bedding, towels, etc.) contaminated by contact with the rash.

Treatment is available

Topical treatments and/or antibiotics are available to treat impetigo. See your doctor. Untreated streptococcal impetigo may result in a complication called nephritis. Nephritis is a serious and possibly deadly kidney disease, which may be prevented by antibiotics.

A person with impetigo should:

- Wash the rash with soap and water and cover it loosely with gauze, a bandage, or clothing.
- Wash hands thoroughly, especially after touching an infected area of the body.
- Use separate towels and washcloths.
- Avoid contact with newborn babies.
- Be excluded from school or child care until 24 hours after the start of treatment.
- Be excluded from food handling until 24 hours after the start of treatment.