

# Impetigo

## FACT SHEET

### What is Impetigo?

Impetigo is an infection of the skin caused by bacteria. It usually begins as a cluster of small blisters, red bumps or sores on the face, ears and hands. Impetigo starts where there is a break in the skin, such as a cut. Most often the sores appear on the arms, legs and face, near the corners of the mouth and nose. The blisters may ooze or be covered with a honey-coloured crust. The rash usually appears around the nose, mouth and parts of the skin not covered by clothes. The infection is common in children and occurs when the bacteria get into scrapes and insect bites. Impetigo often occurs in the summer. Some people think that children get impetigo because they have not been washed properly. However, impetigo does not result from a lack of cleanliness.

### Who catches impetigo?

Anyone can catch impetigo, though children get it more often. It is spread through direct contact with anyone who is infected with these bacteria. Using towels or other personal articles of anyone who is infected may also spread impetigo. Towels and face cloths should not be shared.

### What are the symptoms and how is impetigo diagnosed?

- Impetigo can usually be diagnosed by simply looking at it. If you suspect you child has impetigo, you should go to your GP for treatment. See below for symptoms:
- Small blisters on the face around the nose, mouth, chin or other part of the body
- Redness and a honey coloured discharge may ooze out of the blister
- Itching around the sore
- Scabbing over the blister site with a yellowish crust
- Stays longer than an ordinary pimple

### How is impetigo treated?

Your GP will usually prescribe an antibiotic ointment. Sometimes, if the rash is more extensive or is spreading rapidly, an oral antibiotic will be need.

### Can children with impetigo come into school?

Children diagnosed with impetigo should stay at home until the sores have stopped blistering or crusting, or until 48 hours after starting antibiotic treatment.

### How can you stop impetigo from spreading?

- All cases of impetigo should be treated appropriately and straight away.
- Children with impetigo should be discouraged from touching the sores/rash; this will prevent it from spreading.
- Good personal hygiene is important in preventing infection. Children and household members should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently especially after touching the rash/sores or applying the ointment. Fingernails should be kept short.
- Cuts and scratches should be kept clean and any conditions that involve broken skin e.g. eczema, should be treated promptly.

\*Your GP will be able to answer any further questions you may have on impetigo