

# Let's Talk About...

## Impetigo

Impetigo (im-pe-TIE-go) is a skin infection that spreads easily. It is often caused by the bacteria streptococcus (strep-to-KOCK-us), which is often called strep, or staphylococcus (STAF-il-low-kock-us) or staph. Impetigo can appear on any part of the body. It is more common in the summer, when children often have cuts, scrapes, and insect bites.

### What does impetigo cause?

Impetigo causes sores on the skin, usually less than 1 inch across. They begin as small, red bumps that quickly change to cloudy blisters, then pimples, and finally sores. The sores are often covered by a soft, golden yellow crust. The fluid the sores release can spread the bacteria.

Impetigo sores are often itchy. Your child can spread the infection to other areas by scratching a sore and then touching another part of the skin. Be sure to check all over your child's body for sites of new infection.

### What should I do if my child has impetigo?

- Carefully wash the infected areas 3 times a day with an antibacterial soap and water. Allow the crusts to soak off, or gently remove them. Be sure your child washes before each meal.
- Wash your hands well after caring for your child's skin. Clean the tub or sink well after your child uses them. Do not use your kitchen sink to clean your child's infection.

- Rinse the washcloth you use to clean your child's infection well. Do not clean any other parts of your child's body with the same washcloth. Explain to your child that they should not use anyone else's washcloth, towel, or bed linens. Make sure no one shares these items with your child.
- Keep your child's fingernails short and clean. You may want to put gloves or mittens on their hands at night to keep them from scratching and spreading the infection. Encourage your child to keep hands away from the sores by finding them a new hobby or distraction.
- Your child's doctor may prescribe an antibiotic. Follow the doctor's directions and be sure to finish all the medicine.

If your child has impetigo in small, contained areas, your doctor might prescribe an antibacterial ointment like Bactroban®. If you properly treat impetigo, your child's skin can be completely healed in 7 days. Scars are unusual unless your child picks at the sores.

### Call the doctor if...

- The sores do not look better in 2–3 days.
- The impetigo seems to be spreading.
- Your child has a temperature of 101°F (38.4°C) or more.
- Your child's urine is red or looks like cola.

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