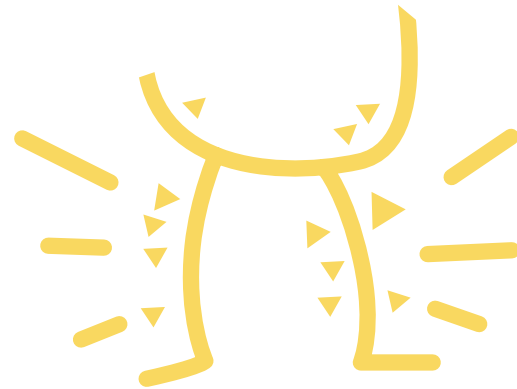


Reducing the spread of impetigo

Impetigo is easily spread but it is usually not a serious infection. People can be worried about it because it is on the skin, and easy to see. Impetigo can occur even when the skin is kept clean, it is not a sign of poor parenting.

- A daily bath or shower with soap and water may lessen the risk of impetigo. Antiseptic soaps can be used, but these can irritate the skin of some people.
- Good hygiene including regular hand washing and throwing away used tissues is advised. Cut fingernails short and keep them clean.
- Make sure that grazes or cuts are thoroughly washed and if the child is scratching a sore, it may be wise to cover it with a dressing.
- When a child has impetigo, carry out medical treatment as advised by the doctor until all sores are healed.
- People coming in contact with someone with impetigo need to wash their hands regularly. Put all dressings in a bin with a lid as soon as they are taken off.

- Impetigo is usually spread by contact with a sore either by touching with the hands or direct sore to skin contact, but some experts think that it can also be spread by contact with clothes, bedding, towels etc. that have touched the sore too. If you are worried about this risk, keep towels, sheets and pillowcases separate from the rest of the family. Wash them in hot water and dry in the sunshine or a hot tumble dryer. Toys can be washed using a mild disinfectant.



For more information contact:

- Local Community School or Child Health Nurse
- Local Family Doctor
- Ngala Family Resource Centre Helpline
8.00 a.m. - 8.00 p.m. 7 days a week
Telephone (08) 9368 9368
Outside metro area - Freecall 1800 111 546
www.ngala.com.au
- Parent Help Centre/Parenting line
Telephone (08) 9272 1466 (24 hour service)
Outside metro area - Freecall 1800 654 432

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Warning

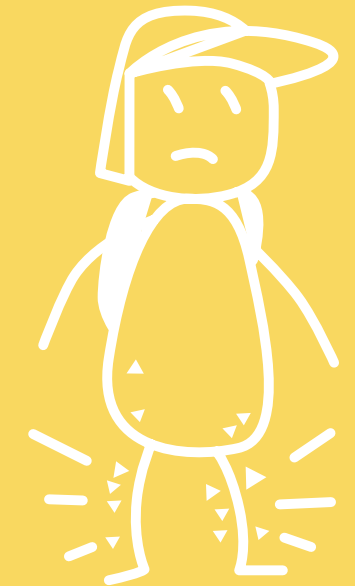
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school sores
(impetigo)



Impetigo is an infection of the skin. It is often called 'school sores', probably because school age children are usually the most likely to get them, and they can be spread at school. Impetigo is very easily spread, but with care spread can be reduced.

What is impetigo?

- Impetigo is an infection of the skin caused by bacteria (usually by one of two bacteria called either staphylococcus aureus or group A, β haemolytic streptococcus). The bacteria that cause impetigo can live on the skin, in the throat or nose, or on other parts of the body without causing a problem, but sometimes they start to cause an infection such as impetigo, sore throat or other infection.
- Impetigo can occur on healthy skin but it often happens when the skin has already been damaged by a scratch, bite or a disease affecting the skin such as eczema or chicken pox.
- The sores can be anywhere on the body, but are often on the face near the mouth and nose, or on the arms and legs.
- Impetigo is very easily spread.
- It is more common in hotter months.

What is impetigo like?

- Impetigo usually starts with a blister or a group of blisters.
- The blister bursts leaving a patch of red, wet skin which weeps.
- The spot usually becomes coated with a tan or yellowish crust, making it look like it has been covered with honey.
- There can be small spots around the first spots, spreading outwards.
- Impetigo is usually itchy.



How is it spread?

- The sore is itchy, and children can scratch it, spreading the infection to nearby skin or to other parts of their own body.
- The fluid and crusts of the sore contain the bacteria, and contact with the sore or with things that have been on the sore (clothing, dressings, towels, etc.) can spread the infection to other people.
- The germs can also be spread from other parts of the body that do not appear to be affected, e.g. from a runny nose.

How long does it take to develop?

- The sore takes about one to three days to develop after contact with fluid or crusts from a sore.

How long is it infectious?

- A sore can be infectious as long as it is weeping. Usually it has stopped being infectious about 24 hours after treatment with an antibiotic has been started, and healing has begun.

What can you do?

- A child with impetigo needs to be checked by a doctor to be sure that it is impetigo. An antibiotic medicine or sometimes ointment is generally prescribed. If an antibiotic ointment is recommended, the sore needs to be washed and the crusts lifted gently off for the ointment to work best.
- Try to prevent scratching of the sores as much as possible, e.g. cover sores with a watertight dressing and cut the child's fingernails.
- Using an antiseptic soap may help stop spread of the infection to other parts of the body.

Keeping children away from school/day care

- Keep the child home from school, kindergarten or day care until 24 hours after treatment has begun.

