

# Impetigo

## What is impetigo?

Impetigo is a common childhood skin infection that is usually caused by bacteria called group A streptococcal (strep) or *Staphylococcus aureus* (staph). Infection occurs when the bacteria get into scrapes and insect bites.

Having impetigo does not mean someone is not clean. It often affects preschool and school-aged children, especially those whose skin has already been irritated or who have other skin problems like eczema or poison ivy.

## What does impetigo look like?

Impetigo usually appears around the mouth, nose or on skin that's not covered by clothes. The rash can start as a cluster of red bumps or blisters. Eventually the blisters may ooze or be covered with a honey-coloured crust. Many germs live under this crust.

Sometimes the infection can become serious. If this happens, your child may have [fever](#), pain, swelling, and may feel weak.

## How is it passed?

**Direct contact:** Impetigo can spread when someone touches an impetigo rash.

**Indirect contact:** The germs can get on bed sheets, towels or clothing that have been in contact with someone's skin. Then a person can pick up the germs from touching those objects.

## How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor can usually diagnose impetigo by looking at it. They may use a skin swab to confirm the type of bacteria causing the infection.

## How is it treated?

Your doctor will [prescribe antibiotics](#). These will be taken orally (by the mouth) or spread on the skin as an ointment (cream). If you think your child has impetigo, contact your doctor.

If your child has impetigo:

- Keep the sores covered with a dressing (light gauze).
- [Wash your hands thoroughly](#) with soap and water, especially after touching infected skin.
- Don't share face cloths or towels among family members.
- Keep your child home from child care or school until he has taken the antibiotic for at least one full day.

- Make sure your child takes all the medication prescribed by your doctor, even if you don't see the rash or any sign of infection anymore.

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The information on Caring for Kids should not be used as a substitute for medical care and advice. If you have specific concerns about your child's health, please see your child's paediatrician, family physician, or another health care provider.