

IMPETIGO

Causes

Impetigo is a skin infection caused by germs. It is most common in children and is contagious. Impetigo forms round, crusted, oozing spots that grow larger day by day. The hands and face are the usual locations for impetigo, but it often appears on other parts of the body.

How does one get impetigo? While the germs causing impetigo may have been caught from someone else with impetigo or boils, impetigo usually begins out of the blue without any apparent source of infections.

Treatment

Oral antibiotics usually clear up impetigo in four to five days. It's most important for the antibiotic to be taken faithfully until the prescribed supply is *finished completely*. In addition, an antibiotic ointment should be applied thinly four times daily.

Infected skin crusts should be removed before the ointment is applied. Soak a soft, clean cloth in a mixture of one-half cup of white vinegar and a quart of lukewarm water. Press this cloth on the crusts for 10-15 minutes three or four times a day for as long as you see crusting or oozing. Then gently wipe off the crusts and smear on a little antibiotic ointment. You can stop soaking the impetigo when crusts no longer form. When the skin has healed, stop the antibiotic ointment.

Contagion

Impetigo is contagious when there is crusting or oozing. While it's contagious, take the following precautions:

- Avoid close contact with other people.
- Use separate towels. Your towels, pillowcases and sheets should be changed after the first day of treatment. Your clothing should be changed and laundered daily for the first two days.

These measures are only needed during the contagious – crusting or oozing – stage of impetigo. Usually the contagious period ends within two days after treatment starts. If the impetigo doesn't heal in one week, return to your doctor for evaluation.

Contact your physician if you have any questions or problems.