

# Impetigo

## FACT SHEET



Washtenaw County  
Health Department

### What is Impetigo?

Impetigo is a bacterial infection of the skin usually caused by either group A streptococci or *Staphylococcus aureus*.

### What are the symptoms?

- Red bumps found anywhere on the skin, usually around the nose, mouth, hands and arms.
- Thick, golden-yellow pus released from the red bumps that dries, crusts and sticks to the skin.

Symptoms may appear 7 - 10 days after exposure to streptococcus and 4-10 days after exposure to *Staphylococcus aureus*. The rash typically lasts 2-3 weeks.

### How is it spread?

Impetigo is spread from person to person through direct contact with infected skin or other items such as clothing, towels, and bed linens that have been contaminated with the infected secretions. It can also be spread to other parts of the body by scratching the blisters and touching other parts of the body. This infection can rapidly spread among persons in close contact, such as children in a child care facility or school.

### How is it treated?

- Wear gloves while applying the antibiotic ointment and wash your hands afterwards.
- Infected areas should be washed with mild soap and running water.
- Encourage the infected child to wash hands frequently, and avoid touching or picking at the rash or scabs.
- An infected child should stay away from other children until 24 hours after the treatment has begun. The infected area should be covered.
- Wash the infected child's clothes, bedding, and towels at least once a day and never share them with other children.
- Your doctor may prescribe antibiotic ointment or oral medication.

### How is it prevented?

- Avoid contact with known cases of impetigo.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and warm running water and teach your children to do the same.
- Wash toys, floors and other surfaces where children may play, with a bleach solution made fresh daily of 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 gallon of water.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).*