

# Impetigo in children

PATIENT  
INFORMATION

This leaflet explains what you can do and what to think about if your child has been diagnosed with impetigo.

## What is impetigo?

Impetigo is a skin infection. It is common in preschool-age children, but occurs at all ages. Impetigo is caused by the staphylococci or streptococci bacteria.

The most common form of impetigo causes red sores with yellowish scabs. These are often found on the face but can develop almost anywhere on the body. Impetigo usually clears up on its own with help from treatments at home.

## What you can do

In most cases, you can treat impetigo at home:

- Moisten and wash the sores thoroughly with soap and water, both morning and night until the scabs disappear.
- You can also treat the sores using a chlorhexidine solution. This is available without prescription at your pharmacy.

Impetigo is highly contagious. So it is important that both children and parents wash their hands properly. Use disposable paper towels. Cut your child's nails and try to stop them picking at and scratching the sores. Change clothes and pillowcases often.

Preschool-age children should be kept at home until there are no new sores and their sores have healed and dried up. Older children who understand the importance of washing their hands properly can go to school.

## What should you be aware of?

Please contact your healthcare provider again if

- there has been no improvement within a week, despite treating the impetigo at home following the steps above
- the impetigo has spread or if your child gets worse in some other way.

Seek medical care right away if your child quickly becomes very unwell with a high fever and their general health becomes poor. This applies to anyone else in the family as well.

PLEASE TURN OVER... ➤



Folkhälsomyndigheten

Strama

## Do antibiotics help if you have impetigo?

Impetigo that does not go away despite self-care may need to be treated with an anti-bacterial ointment. If the impetigo is extensive or significantly worsens, antibiotics may sometimes be needed in the form of tablets or a liquid that you drink. If the doctor decides that your child needs antibiotics, it is important that they take the medication as instructed by the doctor.

## Are there any disadvantages to antibiotics?

Antibiotics are important medications needed for a number of bacterial infections. They must only be taken when there is a clear benefit, as antibiotics also have disadvantages. Antibiotics also kill the 'good' bacteria in your body. Antibiotics can cause side effects, such as diarrhoea and rashes/hives.

The more antibiotics are used in society, the bigger the risk of bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics and more difficult to treat. This is another reason why antibiotics must only be used when there is a benefit.

### Notes

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Call **1177** if you need medical advice. They will help you assess the symptoms or tell you where you can go for treatment. You can also visit **[www.1177.se](http://www.1177.se)**

This information was produced by the Public Health Agency of Sweden and Strama, the Swedish strategic programme against antibiotic resistance. The fact sheet is part of the Antibiotic Smart Sweden initiative. The text is based on treatment recommendations from the Swedish Medical Products Agency. The information applies to the expected progression of common infections. The fact sheet can be downloaded in Swedish and several other languages from [www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/patinfo-svinkoppor](http://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/patinfo-svinkoppor)

