

MONROE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

DISEASE CONTROL UNIT 753-5164

Impetigo

What is impetigo?

Impetigo is a rash caused by either streptococcus or staphylococcus bacteria.

Who gets impetigo?

Anyone may contract the infection. Schools, the military and other situations in which close contact occurs, predispose people to transmission.

How is impetigo spread?

The organism may be acquired from others with impetigo, by physical contact with the lesion when draining or through contact with contaminated objects. Less commonly, people with strep throat or carriers of strep bacteria may infect persons with open skin lesions (e.g. insect bites or burns). Good handwashing is very important in preventing the spread of this infection.

What are the symptoms of impetigo?

Impetigo initially may appear as blisters, but rapidly progresses to an amber-colored crusting stage. The rash commonly involves the area around the nose because of the tendency for a child to scratch this area with contaminated fingers. Other areas that are easily scratched also become infected.

How soon do symptoms appear?

In impetigo, the period is variable and indefinite, but usually one to 10 days.

When and for how long is a person able to spread impetigo?

People are most likely to transmit impetigo when the lesions are draining. Children should not return to school until on therapy for one day or until lesions are no longer draining.

What is the treatment for impetigo?

- Local antibacterial preparations, such as mupirocin ointment may be satisfactory for treatment of streptococcal impetigo.
- In situations of multiple lesions, impetigo in multiple family members or in day care groups, impetigo should be treated systemically with antibiotics taken by mouth.
- Resistance to antibiotics is a developing problem that needs to be considered in evaluating skin infections. Doctors should culture the infection and determine the appropriate antibiotic treatment.