

# Impetigo

## What is "impetigo"?

A common, superficial bacterial infection of the skin. The two main forms are non-bullous and bullous (more common in infants). Both types can affect all ages, but are most common in young children. Infection is usually mild and complications are rare.



## What are the symptoms?

- Non-bullous impetigo presents with thin vesicles or pustules which quickly burst and form a golden/brown crust (like cornflakes stuck on skin) - it can be mildly itchy and usually affects the area around the mouth and nose
- Bullous impetigo presents with fluid filled vesicles and blisters which can persist for 2-3 days, and when they rupture they leave a thin flat yellow/brown crust. They occur on the flexures, face, trunk and limbs.

## How is it treated?

Most cases get better in 7 to 10 days with treatment. Options include:

- Topical hydrogen peroxide 1% cream, two or three times a day for 5 to 7 days, for localised non-bullous infections
- Topical antibiotics such as fusidic acid applied three times a day for 5 to 7 days
- Oral antibiotics if infection is widespread, or you are systemically unwell, at high risk of complications or have bullous impetigo: such as flucloxacillin, clarithromycin or erythromycin

## How can I help myself?

- Stay away from work or school until the lesions are dry and scabbed over, or for 48h after starting antibiotic treatment
- Wash affected areas with soap and water, and wash your hands regularly, particularly after touching a patch of impetigo
- Avoid scratching the affected areas
- Avoid sharing towels, face cloths, and other personal care products, and thoroughly clean potentially contaminated toys and play equipment
- Read the following patient information leaflets:



[www.bad.org.uk/pils/impetigo](http://www.bad.org.uk/pils/impetigo)



[www.nhs.uk/conditions/impetigo/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/impetigo/)

## When should I seek further help?

- The infection is spreading (it looks like it's getting bigger)
- Treatment has not worked within 7 to 10 days
- You keep getting impetigo
- You get symptoms of complications from impetigo (this is rare) - such as swollen glands, stomach pain, high temperature, shortness of breath, joint pain or other rashes

Adapted from NICE CKS - Impetigo  
<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/impetigo/diagnosis/clinical-features/>  
and NHS online  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/impetigo/>