

G645k Infection Control Guidance – Impetigo

A Public information leaflet on
Impetigo

Some advice about how to recognise and
treat impetigo

(Norfolk Health Protection Unit working with the Norfolk Public Health Network
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What is impetigo?

- Impetigo is an infection of the skin caused by germs (bacteria).
- Anyone can be affected, but it is more common among children, and particularly during warm weather.
- Impetigo most commonly occurs in the skin around the nose and mouth, but it can also affect skin in other parts of the body.

How do you catch impetigo?

- The germ, which causes impetigo, gets on to the skin by direct contact with the skin of an infected person.
- The most likely method of spread is for an infected person to scratch their itchy rash and thus get the germs on their fingers. These are then transferred to another person by touching their skin.

How can you recognise impetigo?

- It usually takes about 4 - 10 days for the rash to appear once someone's skin is infected with the germ.
- Impetigo makes the skin go red and weepy. Sometimes small blisters can be seen. The affected area quickly becomes crusty, often with a yellowish colour.
- The rash is uncomfortable and itchy and will become more widespread if not treated.

How is it treated?

- Your General Practitioner (GP) at the local surgery or health centre should be contacted for advice about treatment.

How can spread be prevented?

- It is most important that the treatment is completed strictly according to instructions.
- Where possible the rash should be covered during treatment until it is dry and crusted over.

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- Good personal hygiene is most important, particularly thorough hand washing after touching the rash.
- Affected persons should use separate towels and flannels until the rash has cleared.
- Members of the same household as the affected person should carefully check their own skin for signs of infection and attend their GP if they suspect a problem.
- If a school or playgroup is involved, the person in charge should be alerted about the problem, in case other children are also infected.

Attendance at school or work?

- Once an infection is suspected, the affected person should not attend school or work and should seek early advice from their GP.
- After completing 48 hours of treatment, it is usually safe to return to school or work. Your doctor can advise.

Remember, thorough hand washing is most important in avoiding the spread of impetigo.

Don't forget to properly complete the treatment or the problem may return.