

For more information about **Impetigo** contact:

*The Community Infection Control Nurse at your  
local Primary Care Trust (PCT)  
or your local Health Protection Unit*

# HPA North West



# Impetigo

Information produced by: Health Protection Agency North West

The Health Protection Agency is a new independent organisation dedicated to protecting people's health. It brings together the expertise formerly in a number of official organisations.



## INFORMATION LEAFLET

### What is Impetigo?

Impetigo is a bacterial infection of the skin. It is most common on the face around the nose and mouth. The infection starts with a few small blisters which then become filled with pus. These blisters crust over and become yellow in colour.

### How do you get it?

Impetigo is very infectious. It can be caught from infected people by direct skin contact. It can also be caught by sharing objects such as towels, face flannels and toys which have been handled by someone who already has the infection.

Symptoms usually start 4 – 10 days after contact with the bacteria.

### How is it treated?

Antibiotics treat impetigo quickly and effectively. The doctor may give you antibiotics as a cream or as a medicine. You must follow the instructions and **complete the course**.

### Can it be passed on to someone else?

**YES.** Someone else can catch it off you as easily as you caught it off another person. The infection can be passed on until treatment has been started and the infected area begins to heal.

Fingers that have been in contact with the infected areas are an ideal way of spreading germs to another person. Frequent handwashing will reduce the chances of this happening. Hands must **always** be washed after touching the infected area.

### Do I need to keep my child off school or nursery?

**YES.** Children who have Impetigo should not be sent to school or nursery until 24 hours of treatment has been completed and the affected area has stopped weeping.

### What about playing with brothers and sisters?

Children should not be treated as outcasts at home. Reducing skin contact with brothers and sisters is advisable but may not be possible. As the infection is also spread by sharing towels and flannels, it would help if everyone could have their own towel and flannel until the infection is cleared. Avoid the use of shared bar soap.

### What should I do if the impetigo keeps coming back?

If impetigo keeps coming back despite following the advice given above, it may be that your child is carrying the germ in their nose. This is not uncommon and can be simply treated by using a special nose cream that your doctor can prescribe.

### I run a nursery or a school, what should I do?

If you suspect that a child may have Impetigo, they need to see their GP. The child should not be allowed to return to nursery/school until **24 hours of treatment has been completed** and the affected area has stopped weeping.

Because Impetigo can be caught from objects as well as from people, you will need to ensure that surfaces, floors and toys are cleaned. You do not have to use any special cleaning agent, ordinary detergent and hot water will do, as long as cleaning is thorough. Ideally, any carpets should be shampooed.

Care should also be taken to ensure that children do not share facecloths and towels.

All nurseries and schools should provide paper towels and liquid soap.