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## Impetigo

### What is Impetigo?

Impetigo, more commonly called "school sores", is a very contagious skin infection. It can occur anywhere on the skin, but usually affects the face, **particularly around the mouth and nose**. Impetigo is most common in infants and children, especially those just starting school, but it can affect adults.

### What is the cause?

Impetigo is caused by two strains of bacteria - **streptococcus and staphylococcus**. There is an increased risk of infection in those with sensitive skin, lowered resistance from illness, poor hygiene or poor nutrition. The risk also increases in warm, humid weather and in crowded living conditions.

### What are the symptoms?

Impetigo usually begins with a small patch of tiny blisters around the mouth and nose. These break open to form an area of weeping red skin, which soon develops a **golden crust**. The infection then spreads from the edges and forms new patches. **The spread can be very rapid. Impetigo can occur on other parts on the body, especially around the buttocks, legs and arms.** The blisters and crust of impetigo are not painful, but they may itch. A skin swab and culture can confirm the responsible germ.

### What are the risks?

If properly treated, it is not usually a serious disease, although streptococcal infection can infrequently lead to a serious kidney disease called glomerulonephritis. It can also be serious in newborn infants, due to their weaker immune system.

### What should be done to prevent the spread?

It is important to treat impetigo as soon as possible and take measures to prevent the spread within the family and to others. Patients should have their own towel, soap and face towels, and never share them. All family members should use an antibacterial soap. **Fingernails should be cut short and picking of sores avoided.** Infected adults should wash their hands thoroughly in an antiseptic before preparing food. Keep bed linen, clothes and towels separate. If the sores are on exposed areas, **cover them with band-aids, gauze or tape** before sending your kids to school. **Keep the skin exposed to air at bedtime.**

### What is the treatment?

Apply mupirocin ointment twice to three times daily. Before applying, wash the affected area and gently sponge off any crusts. Wash hands carefully after this treatment. This method should cure **most mild cases**. For more severe cases, **where the lesions have spread already**, penicillin-type antibiotics taken by mouth for 7 to 10 days. **To avoid recurrence of impetigo - apply mupirocin gently using a qtip to each nostril every night for 10 days.** Very often, the bacteria causing impetigo resides in the nose and can re-infect if not treated.

For more handouts visit our website at [www.drsimai.com](http://www.drsimai.com)

Adapted from [http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact\\_sheets/Impetigo\\_school\\_sores/](http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Impetigo_school_sores/)