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## **IMPETIGO**

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### **What is it?**

Impetigo is a skin infection caused by streptococcus (strep) and staphylococcus (staph) bacteria. The infection develops when the bacteria gets into openings in the skin and is common in children but can affect people of all ages. Impetigo is most common in the summer and does not result from a lack of cleanliness.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Impetigo is a skin rash that is characterized by a cluster of blisters or red bumps. The blisters may ooze or be covered with a honey-coloured crust. The rash usually appears around the nose, mouth and parts of the skin not covered by clothes. It is often itchy. Symptoms will commonly appear 1-10 days after becoming infected.

### **How is it spread?**

Impetigo is spread from person to person through direct contact with the discharge from the lesions. Less commonly, it is spread by touching articles, such as clothing, bedding and towels, contaminated with the blisters. This infection can rapidly spread among persons in close contact, such as children in a childcare facility or school. It can be prevented by washing hands after touching infected skin.

### **What is the treatment?**

A physician can diagnose impetigo by examining the child. The specific bacteria causing the infection is determined by a culture (swab) taken by the physician. The infection is treated with antibiotics, which may be taken by mouth or applied on the skin in the form of an ointment.

### **What should I do if I have it?**

- Wash the rash with soap and water and cover loosely with gauze, A bandage or clothing
- Wash hands thoroughly, especially after touching an infected area of the body
- Use separate towels and washcloths than uninfected persons
- Avoid contact with newborn babies
- Be excluded from school or daycare until 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment
- Be excluded from food handling until 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment

For more information please call Public Health at 519-376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456.