

# New York State Department of Health

## Impetigo

Last Reviewed: November 2006

### What is impetigo?

Impetigo is a common infection of the skin resulting in blisters that may occur anywhere on the body but are usually observed around the nose or mouth. It is caused by one of two types of bacteria, either group A *streptococci* or *Staphylococcus aureus*.

### Who gets impetigo?

Commonly, children and young adults are affected. In adults, impetigo may follow other skin problems or after an upper respiratory tract infection. Impetigo occurs more in the hot humid summer months.

### How is impetigo spread?

Impetigo is spread person to person through direct contact with discharge from blisters.

### What are the symptoms of impetigo?

An itchy rash or red sores form that blister and then ooze. The sores may grow in size and spread. When blisters break, they form a flat, honey-colored crust.

### How soon do symptoms appear?

Blisters appear four to 10 days after exposure to the fluids from blisters on another person.

### What is the treatment for impetigo?

Impetigo can be successfully treated with antibiotics prescribed by a health care provider. With antibiotic treatment, healing should begin within three days.

### What can a person do to minimize the spread of impetigo?

Impetigo is contagious. Follow your doctor's instructions. It is important to wash the rash with soap and water and to cover it loosely with gauze or a bandage. Thorough hand washing is necessary, especially after touching infected areas of the body. A person with impetigo should avoid contact with newborn babies and should be excluded from school, daycare, or food handling until receiving permission from a health care provider or until 24 hours after starting antibiotic treatment. Do not share unwashed towels, washcloths, or clothing from someone who is infected.

Revised: June 2004