



# Central Michigan District Health Department

*Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities*



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## Impetigo

### What is Impetigo?

Impetigo is a skin infection caused by Streptococcus (strep A) and staphylococcus (staph) bacteria. When either of these bacteria infect the skin, sores develop. Anyone can get impetigo, but it occurs more often in children. While Impetigo can be found anywhere on the body, it most often affects exposed skin, such as around the nose and mouth, or arms or legs.

### What are the symptoms?

Approximately 10 days after a person is exposed to the bacteria, sores begin to appear. Impetigo is characterized by a cluster of blisters or red bumps that are often itchy. The blisters may ooze or be covered with a scab. The scabs turn honey colored as they are healing.

### How is it spread?

Impetigo is spread from person to person through direct contact with the discharge from the lesions; for example, when someone touches an impetigo rash and then touches another person. Less commonly, it can be spread through touching articles (such as clothing, bedding, towels, etc.) contaminated with the blisters. This infection can rapidly spread among persons in close contact, such as infants and children in a childcare facility or school, or skin to skin contact through playing sports like wrestling or football.

### What is the treatment?

A physician can diagnose impetigo by examining the child. The infection is treated with antibiotics, which may be given by mouth or applied on the skin in the form of an ointment.

### A person with impetigo should:

- Wash the rash with soap and water and cover it loosely with gauze, a bandage, or clothing.
- Wash hands thoroughly, especially after touching an infected area of the body.
- Use separate towels and washcloths.
- Wash an infected person's clothes, linens and towels every day and don't share them with anyone else in the family.
- Avoid contact with newborn babies.
- Be excluded from school or daycare until 24 hours after the start of treatment.
- Keep all sores on the exposed skin covered.