

# Impetigo (school sores)

## Community and Public Health

Phone: 03 364 1777

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Web: [www.cph.co.nz](http://www.cph.co.nz)

Impetigo (Im-pa-ty-go) often called school sores, is a crusty, weepy infection of the superficial layers of the skin.

It is caused by a *Staphylococcus* bacteria commonly found in the environment and on humans and is common in children, especially in the spring and autumn.

### What are the symptoms?

The appearance of itchy small blisters or scabs on the exposed parts of the body, which form yellow crusts. The blisters often start around the legs, arms, nose and on the face, and can spread to other parts of the body particularly where the skin is broken e.g. cuts or eczema.

### How is it caught?

Impetigo is contagious, and is transferred by direct contact with an infected individual, or from infected towels, toys and clothes.

It is important to prevent an infected person from scratching the sores as this will spread the infection.

Usually a sore has stopped being infectious about 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has been started, and healing has begun.

### Do we need to see a doctor?

Only your doctor can give you the medication and the supervision required.

Go back to your GP if you have started treatment and:

- the sores do not begin to heal within 2 days;
- More sores develop;
- Redness spreads around a sore; and/or
- Person becomes unwell with a fever

### How is it treated?

Your doctor may prescribe one or both of the following treatments:

- Oral antibiotics
- An antibiotic ointment applied to the affected area as directed

**The oral antibiotics must be taken everyday until they are finished, even if the sores clear earlier.**

The crusts should be removed with warm saline made by mixing one teaspoon of salt in 600 ml of boiled water that has been cooled.

If the infection does not clear up within a week or a fever develops, further medication should be sought immediately. It may mean that the infection has spread to other parts of the body or bloodstream.



### How is the spread prevented?

The person's towel and face cloth should be kept separate and laundered at least daily.

**The infected person should avoid swimming until all the sores have healed**

An antibacterial soap can be helpful. Your Doctor, Practice Nurse and/or Public Health Nurse can advise you on the management of impetigo.

Weeping sores should be kept covered with a non-stick dressing. It is also a good idea to ensure that the child's nails are kept short and clean to prevent further spread.

Ensure hands are washed and dried often, particularly after changing dressings or after coming into contact with infected sores/items.

Remember to put all dressings in a bin with a lid as soon as they are taken off.



## **What about staying away from school or preschool?**

Infected children need stay away from school/ preschool until at least 24 hours after treatment has started, or as advised by your doctor or Public Health Nurse.

## **Do you require further information?**

For further information contact:

- Your local doctor or practice nurse
- Your local Public Health Nurse
- Communicable Diseases at Community and Public Health
- [www.healthinfo.org.nz](http://www.healthinfo.org.nz)
- [www.kidshealth.org.nz](http://www.kidshealth.org.nz)
- [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

## **Other resources available on childhood infections**

- Rotavirus
- Measles
- Hand, foot and mouth disease
- Ringworm
- Slapped cheek disease
- Conjunctivitis
- Threadworms

## **Contact Community and Public Health for more information:**

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