

MSAD # 13 / RSU #83

Health Alert

Impetigo

Important Notice to Parents

Impetigo is a common skin infection caused by Streptococcal or Staphylococcal bacteria. Impetigo is characterized by red bumps, usually on the face (particularly around the nose and mouth) or extremities. Some skin lesions also may appear as red-colored pimples. The red bumps fill with pus, break open and form a honey-colored crust, or scab. The lesions are usually itchy, but not painful. The rash typically lasts 2 to 3 weeks. Lesions may be found on the face, especially around the mouth and nose, but may be found on other areas of the body.

Sores develop 1 to 10 days after bacteria enter the skin. Symptoms usually begin 1 - 3 days after exposure for Streptococcus; usually 4 -10 days for Staphylococcus.

Infection is spread by direct contact with secretions from lesions. The bacteria which cause impetigo are found normally on the skin. Any injury or break in the skin can permit the bacteria to invade the skin and cause infection. Impetigo may be acquired most commonly from contact with a person with impetigo lesions, or less likely from contact with objects or surfaces containing the bacteria. An infected person with sores on one part of the body can also spread sores to a different location on the body.

A person who is untreated can spread the bacteria for as long as drainage occurs from lesions. Once antibiotic therapy is initiated, infected individuals can no longer transmit the infection after 24 hours of antibiotic therapy. Therefore, lesions should be considered infectious until treatment has been administered for 24 hours. The disease responds very quickly to systemic antibiotic treatment and/or prescription topical antibiotic ointments. Lesions are less likely to be infectious once the scabbing lesions have healed.

Parents should keep contagious children home until 24 hours after starting topical or oral antibiotic therapy. Students should avoid scratching and touching the infected area and then touching another area of the body. Draining lesions should be covered at all times with a dressing. Students should not participate in swimming, body contact sports, or food preparation activities until all lesions are healed. They should also be discouraged from sharing towels, clothing, and other personal items. Good personal hygiene and soap and water cleansing of minor skin breaks will help to prevent spread.

Skin wounds should be kept clean and observed for possible signs of infection.

No vaccine is available to prevent impetigo.

Please contact the school nurse, Mel Chadbourne, RN if you have any questions. More information is also available at the Maine CDC web site.