

Impetigo (school sores)

Impetigo is a skin infection that is common in school-aged children. Impetigo appears as flat, yellow, crusty or moist patches or blisters on the skin, usually on the face, arms and legs. The sores can measure 5 millimetres or more. Impetigo spreads easily.

Impetigo is caused by 2 bacteria: *Staphylococcus* and *Streptococcus*. These germs often live harmlessly on and in the body, such as on the skin and in the nose. Cuts, abrasions, or dry and cracked skin can allow the germs to get into deeper layers of the skin and cause infections. However, healthy, intact skin can sometimes develop sores.

How it spreads

The sores are filled with the germs, which spread when others touch the sores or infected fluid. Because the sores can be itchy or painful, people can scratch or touch them, spreading the infection via their hands to other parts of their body or to other people. The infection also spreads by touching contaminated clothing or other items.

Exclusion period

Exclude until antibiotic treatment has started.

Cover any sores on exposed skin with a waterproof dressing (like a plastic adhesive strip).

Actions for educators and other staff

Ensure staff and children have good hand hygiene.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Actions for parents and carers

Keep your child at home until they have had antibiotics for at least 24 hours. If antibiotics are not used, keep the child at home until the sores are dry.

Cover any sores on exposed skin with a waterproof dressing (like a plastic adhesive strip).

Make sure your child washes their hands thoroughly and often, especially if they touch the sores.

More information about impetigo

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of impetigo (healthdirect.gov.au/impetigo).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.