

# Impetigo

**Impetigo is a skin infection that's very contagious but not usually serious. It often gets better in 7 to 10 days if you get treatment. Anyone can get it, but it's very common in young children.**

## Check if you have impetigo

Impetigo starts with red sores or blisters. They quickly burst and leave crusty, golden-brown patches.

These can:

- look a bit like cornflakes stuck to your skin
- get bigger
- spread to other parts of your body
- be itchy
- sometimes be painful



Sores (non-bullous impetigo) or blisters (bullous impetigo) can start anywhere – but usually on exposed areas like your face and



hands.

It's also common for blisters to start



around your tummy. The sores or blisters burst and form crusty patches. If you're not sure it's impetigo

**Non-urgent advice: See a GP if you or your child:**

- might have impetigo
- had treatment for impetigo but the symptoms change or get worse
- had impetigo before and it keeps coming back

Impetigo is very infectious. Check with the GP before you go in to the practice. They may suggest a phone consultation.

Information:

### **Coronavirus update: how to contact a GP**

It's still important to get help from a GP if you need it. To contact your GP surgery:

- visit their website
- use the [NHS App](#)
- call them

[Find out about using the NHS during coronavirus](#)

## **Treatment for impetigo from a GP**

A GP will check it's not something more serious, like [cellulitis](#).

If it's impetigo, they can prescribe antibiotic cream to speed up your recovery or antibiotic tablets if it's very bad.

### **Important**

Do not stop using the antibiotic cream or tablets early, even if the impetigo starts to clear up.

### **If your impetigo keeps coming back**

A GP can take a swab from around your nose to check for the bacteria that causes impetigo.

They might prescribe an antiseptic nasal cream to try to clear the bacteria and stop the impetigo coming back.

## Stop impetigo spreading or getting worse

Impetigo can easily spread to other parts of your body or to other people until it stops being contagious.

It stops being contagious:

- 48 hours after you start using the medicine your GP prescribed
- when the patches dry out and crust over (if you do not get treatment)

You can do some things to help stop it spreading or getting worse while it's still contagious:

### Do

- stay away from school or work
- keep sores, blisters and crusty patches clean and dry
- cover them with loose clothing or gauze bandages
- wash your hands frequently
- wash your flannels, sheets and towels at a high temperature
- wash or wipe down toys with detergent and warm water if your children have impetigo

### Don't

- do not touch or scratch sores, blisters or crusty patches – this also helps stop scarring
- do not have close contact with children or people with diabetes or a weakened immune system (if they're having chemotherapy, for example)
- do not share flannels, sheets or towels
- do not prepare food for other people
- do not go to the gym
- do not play contact sports like football

## How to avoid impetigo

Impetigo usually infects skin that's already damaged.

Avoid infection by:

- keeping cuts, scratches and insect bites clean – for example, by washing with warm water and soap
- getting treatment for skin conditions, like [eczema](#)