



## *Hawaii State Department of Health*

### *Disease Investigation Branch*

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## **Impetigo**

### **What is impetigo?**

Impetigo is a common bacterial infection of the skin caused by streptococcal and staphylococcal bacteria. Most cases of impetigo occur in children.

### **How do you get it?**

Impetigo frequently begins with a small scratch, scrape, or insect bite that becomes infected with bacteria. Impetigo can spread from person-to-person by direct contact. One can also spread the infection from one part of the body to another. Impetigo occurs most often during hot, humid, summer weather especially where crowded or unsanitary conditions exist.

### **What are the symptoms of impetigo?**

Impetigo usually begins as a reddish spot or bump on the skin. Yellow pus accumulates and dries, leaving a honey-colored scab that can be itchy. Healing generally occurs without scarring. However, scratching the sore can promote the spread of infection to other sites.

### **When do symptoms start?**

The symptoms usually start 1 to 3 days after bacteria are introduced into the skin.

### **What is the treatment for impetigo?**

Topical antibiotics can be used to treat insect bites or minor scrapes and abrasions before infection becomes apparent. Medicines taken by mouth can be prescribed by the doctor to treat impetigo once it has become established.

### **Should a student with impetigo be excluded from school?**

Yes. A student should be excluded from school until 24 hours after beginning treatment.

### **How can you keep from getting it?**

Promptly clean and treat any small cuts or abrasions of the skin.

Keep the area clean and avoid touching or scratching the sores.

When caring for infected persons, wash the hands often with soap and water to avoid transmitting the disease to others.

Do not share towels, wash cloths or clothing with someone with impetigo without first washing the items in hot soapy water.