

4. IMPETIGO

Date: _____

Dear Parent or Guardian,

There has been a suspected case of impetigo in your child's school and your child may have been exposed. Although impetigo is not usually a serious condition, it is very infectious, and if not treated promptly complications may occasionally occur.

What is impetigo?

Impetigo is a bacterial infection of the skin caused by the same bacteria that commonly cause sore throats i.e. group A streptococci, although it can also be caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* or a mixture of the two. It can cause small blisters on the skin which break and become covered with a yellow crust. Impetigo commonly affects the hands and face although it can spread to other parts of the body especially if the skin is broken.

Who catches impetigo?

Anyone can catch impetigo, but most cases occur in crowded environments e.g. in children in schools.

How is impetigo spread?

Impetigo is usually spread by direct contact with someone who is infected or indirectly by sharing towels, face cloths, clothes or toys that have been used by someone who is infected. The bacteria are present in the skin lesions. Secretions from the rash/sores are infectious. Hands that touch the rash/sores can become contaminated and can pass the infection to other body sites or other people.

How is impetigo diagnosed?

Impetigo can usually be diagnosed by simply looking at it. If you suspect your child has impetigo, you should attend your GP for confirmation and treatment.

How is impetigo treated?

Your GP will usually prescribe an antibiotic ointment. Sometimes, if the rash is more extensive or is spreading rapidly, an oral antibiotic will be needed.

Should children with impetigo be excluded from school?

Children diagnosed with impetigo should remain out of school until the sores have stopped blistering or crusting, or until 24 hours after starting appropriate treatment.

How can you stop the spread of impetigo?

- All cases of impetigo should be treated appropriately and promptly.
- Good personal hygiene is important in preventing infection. Children and household members should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently especially after touching the rash/sores or applying skin ointment. Fingernails should be kept short.
- Children with impetigo should be discouraged from touching the sores/rash to prevent further spread.
- Cuts and scratches should be kept clean and any conditions that involve broken skin, e.g. eczema, should be treated promptly.
- Towels and face cloths should not be shared.

Your GP will be able to answer any further questions you may have on impetigo.