IMPETIGO

What is it?

Impetigo is a skin infection caused by certain bacteria (staphylococcus and streptococcus).

How do I know someone has it?

Impetigo commonly affects the face particularly around the nose and mouth with initial redness which can develop into weeping spots and then crusts. Young children are more likely to get impetigo and they may become quite miserable, irritable and feverish and have difficulty in feeding. The spots will heal up without scarring.

Is it infectious?

Yes. It is mainly infectious whilst the septic spots are discharging pus. It is spread by direct contact with the skin of the infected person and by sharing towels etc. The bacteria are also carried in the nose by 20-30% of the population and passed on by hand contact. It is possible to infect other parts of your own body when carrying the bacteria in the nose. Transmission can be prevented by frequent hand washing and by avoiding the sharing of items that have had contact with the spots.

What is the incubation period?

Usually between 4 and 10 days.

Is there any treatment?

Yes. Antibiotics can be helpful in many cases in tablets or syrup.

What should I do if someone has the illness?

There is no need to cover the infected area - leave it open to the air. As with any childhood illness, children should be given frequent fluids and if they are miserable or feverish, liquid paracetamol in the recommended doses. Remember to wash your hands frequently when you are dealing with an infected child.

How soon can someone return to school or work?

Once the spots are healed or crusted over and the child is feeling well or after 24 hours of antibiotic treatment.

August 1999
Berkshire Health Authority
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