

# IMPETIGO

## What is impetigo?

Impetigo is a common bacterial skin infection caused by Group *streptococcus* (GAS) or "strep." Group A *Streptococcus* (GAS) or "strep" is a common bacterium (bacterium is the singular form of the plural, bacteria) that is found on the skin or in the throat ("strep throat"). People can carry GAS and have no symptoms of illness or they may develop relatively mild skin infections, including impetigo.

## How does impetigo spread?

Impetigo can be transmitted through direct person-to-person contact with someone who has the infection. It can also be picked up indirectly through contact with an item (such as a wrestling mat, gear, towel, razor, or cell phone) that is contaminated with the bacterium.

## What are the symptoms of impetigo?

- Symptoms usually began 1-3 days after infection.
- Sores (lesions) begin as small red spots, usually on the face (especially around the nose and mouth), but can appear anywhere on the body.
- The sores are often itchy, but usually not painful.
- The sores develop into blisters that break open and ooze fluid -- this fluid contains infectious bacteria that can infect others if they have contact with it.
- After a few days, the ruptured blisters form a flat, thick, honey-colored (yellowish-brown) crust that eventually disappears, leaving red marks that heal without scarring.
- There may be swollen glands (enlarged lymph nodes), but usually no fever.

## What should athletes do if they think they have impetigo?

While mild cases of impetigo may be treated without seeing a health care provider, athletes are recommended to have a medical professional determine what type of infection they have, how to treat it, and if it is contagious. If the infection is contagious, athletes should not practice or compete until their medical provider clears them to return.

## What is the treatment?

When it just affects a small area of the skin (and especially if it's the non-bullous form), **impetigo** usually is **treated** with antibiotic ointment. But if the infection has spread to other areas of the body or the ointment isn't working, the doctor may prescribe an antibiotic pill or liquid to be taken for 7-10 days.