

Cellulitis

Information for parents and/or caregivers

What is cellulitis?

Cellulitis is an infection of the skin. It is caused by bacteria, usually streptococcus or staphylococcus. These bacteria live on the skin and may enter an area of broken skin like a cut or scratch. This causes pain, swelling, warmth and redness. Your child will need antibiotics to treat the infection.

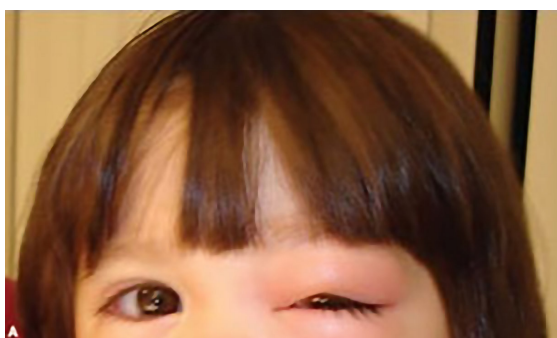
Signs and Symptoms of cellulitis

Cellulitis can start as a small, swollen area of pain or warmth, with redness on the skin. As this red area begins to spread, your child may start to feel sick and get a fever. They may have swollen glands (lymph nodes) near the area of infected skin. The infection can spread to the rest of the body. Cellulitis is usually not contagious; however the bacteria can be spread through an open wound

Causes of cellulitis

Cellulitis can affect skin on most parts of the body. Usually it starts in areas that have had:

- an insect bite, burn, abrasion or cut
- a surgical wound
- skin problems such as eczema, psoriasis, scabies or acne
- a foreign object in the skin, such as metal or glass
- Often the cause is unknown. Anyone at any age can develop cellulitis



When to seek help?

Cellulitis almost always needs to be treated with antibiotics, so all children with cellulitis should be seen by a doctor.

It is more urgent if:

- your child develops a fever greater than 38 degrees
- the affected skin is on the face
- your child has a chronic illness (such as diabetes) or a problem with their immune system
- your child has been bitten by an animal (or human)
- the area of redness is spreading very quickly or is very painful

Treatment

Most children with cellulitis can be treated at home with oral antibiotics.

Most children respond to the antibiotics and begin to show improvement within two to three days.

More severe cellulitis may need treatment in hospital with intravenous (IV; a drip) antibiotics.

Pain relievers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can help reduce discomfort.



Care at home

Rest and, if possible, raise the affected area. For example, place an arm in a sling or prop a leg on pillows. This may ease the pain and reduce swelling.

Pain relievers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can help reduce discomfort. All medication should be given according to the doctor's instructions.

You may be advised to make a follow-up appointment with your doctor to make sure the cellulitis is improving. Do not forget to do this. Always wash your hands before and after touching the infected area.

Key points to remember

- Cellulitis is a bacterial infection of the skin that often happens in areas that are damaged or inflamed.
- Treatment includes a course of antibiotics.
- Cellulitis around the eye area needs careful monitoring by a doctor.

For more information

- See your family doctor
- For 24 hour health advice call - Healthdirect Australia 1800 022 222
- Parent Helpline 1300 364 100
- Local emergency department

Adapted from:

Cellulitis: kids information sheet:

Royal Children hospital: Melbourne

Cellulitis: kidshealth.org (October 2013)

Patient information: Cellulitis and erysipelas (skin infections) (The Basics)
Up to Date: (May 2016)

Patient information: Skin and soft tissue infection (cellulitis) (Beyond the Basics)
Up to date: (August 2015)

For more information

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