

Skin Infections

Bacterial Skin Infections:

Cause: Occurs when bacteria (germs) break through the body's natural defenses or find access through a cut, an abrasion, irritation or hair opening. The bacteria are usually staphylococci or streptococci.

Spread: These infections are contagious when they are crusting or oozing. Avoid close contact with other people. Use separate towels and wash hands frequently. Towels, bed sheets and clothing should be changed and laundered daily for the first few days of treatment.

Treatment: Apply **warm compresses** to the affected area when possible. Fold several layers of hand towels and dip in plain hot water. Re-soak the cloths frequently to keep them warm. Warm soaks can be done several times a day.

You can help a boil heal by "resting" it or moving it as little as possible. Avoid squeezing/popping, which can spread the infection.

Incision and drainage may be necessary when pus collects beneath the skin. Dressings should be changed daily or when they become moist. Clean with soap and water. Apply a new bandage as needed.

Antibiotics taken by mouth or in a topical cream may be prescribed to clear the infection. Carefully follow the instructions on the prescription.

Common examples include:

Abscess (Boil): A painful area of swelling and collection of pus within the skin caused by deep infection. This pus may ooze out through the skin or require minor surgery to drain.

Cellulitis: A rapidly spreading skin infection producing redness, swelling, warmth, and tenderness without obvious abscess-like focal point. A red line occasionally extends from the middle of the cellulitis following lymph channels. Cellulitis can be dangerous if it reaches the blood stream.

Folliculitis: Inflammation of hair follicles characterized by "pimples" around the hair shafts. A **furuncle** is infection of a hair follicle with small abscess formation. A **carbuncle** is a collection of several infected hair follicles in a single inflammatory swelling with drainage of pus from multiple follicles

Impetigo: A superficial skin infection that forms round, oozing spots with honey-colored discharge/crusts, usually on the face or extremities.

Paronychia: An infection under the cuticle of a fingernail. The affected area of the finger is usually red, swollen, tender and sometimes a small amount of yellow pus can be seen under the cuticle.

Fungal Infections:

Cause: Growth of fungus is most favorable in damp regions or humid environments. They can be obtained through contact with oneself, other individuals, animals or inanimate objects (such as mats, locker room/bathroom floors, showers, rugs, clothing, towels, etc).

Spread: These infections are contagious. Fungal infections can be spread by skin-to-skin contact from oneself or others, or direct contact with animals and inanimate objects

Diagnosis: Typically these infections are diagnosed by clinical evaluation only. A scraping of the affected skin, or KOH prep, can be collected by your provider, and then viewed under a microscope to help confirm the diagnosis if needed. A fungal culture might also be collected and sent to the lab.

Treatment: Most superficial fungal infections can be managed with topical therapy. Oral agents are used for extensive skin infections, infections that include hair follicles, deep skin infections or nails.

Common examples include:

Tinea Corporis (Ringworm): Fungal infection on a body surface other than feet, groin, face, scalp/hair or beard regions. Appears as a red, itchy, circular/oval, scaly patch that enlarges and forms a ring type appearance. Has central clearing and raised borders.

Tinea Pedis (Athlete's foot): Most common form of dermatophyte infection. Sweaty feet and tight-fitting shoes are often associated. Appears in a variety of presentations including itchy scale and erosions between the toes, excessive scale in a "moccasin" distribution on the foot which can be mistaken for dry skin, or itchy fluid filled bubbles with surrounding redness on the feet. This infection can also spread from the feet to other areas of the body.

Tinea Cruris (Jock Itch): More common in males. Can be contracted from tinea pedis infection spread to groin. Appears as red patches on upper thighs, which spread to the groin and buttock regions. Predisposing factors include obesity, sweating, diabetes and immunodeficiency. Avoid tight fitting clothing and non-cotton underwear.

Call UHS if any of the following happens:

- Temperature over 102 F
- Onset of chills about 24 hours after treatment has started
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Drowsiness or lethargy
- Recurrence of symptoms
- Lack of improvement.

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In an emergency go to Mount Nittany Medical Center or call 911 for an ambulance.

Test Results and Advice Nurse

Please call the nurse for test results and advice: 814-863-4463

Appointments

Appointments can be made online via the UHS website, by phone or in person. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call and cancel. Otherwise you will be charged for the visit.

To schedule or cancel appointments call 814-863-0774 or schedule your appointment online through the UHS website

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