

Skin Infections

Types of Skin Infections

Abscess: (Boil) a painful 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 finger nail. 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.

Causes of Skin Infections

Skin infections are caused by bacteria (germs) breaking through the body's natural defenses or finding access through a cut, an abrasion, irritation or hair opening. The bacteria are usually staphylococci or streptococci.

Spread of Skin Infections

Skin 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 of the area can also be done several times a day.

You can help a boil heal by "resting" it or moving it as little as possible.

Incision and drainage may be necessary when pus collects beneath the skin. Dressing should be changed daily or when they become moist and area should be cleaned with soap and water and re-dressed 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.

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
- Pain not controlled by prescribed medication
- Recurrence of symptoms
- Lack of improvement.

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: 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 863-0774 or schedule your appointment online through the UHS website

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