IMPETIGO

Impetigo is a contagious skin infection often occurring on the nose, arms, legs, or around the mouth. This infection is common in young children.

**CAUSE**

Streptococcus and/or Staphylococcus bacteria, including methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA).

**SYMPTOMS**

Typically begins at a break in the skin (e.g., insect bite, cut). Sores form on the skin and produce a thick golden-yellow discharge that dries, crusts, and sticks to the skin. Rarely, problems such as kidney disease or cellulitis (skin infection) may develop if children do not receive proper treatment.

**SPREAD**

Spread from person-to-person through touching the fluid from the sores. Rarely, through touching contaminated objects (e.g., surfaces, clothing, bedding, towels).

**INCUBATION**

It usually takes 1 to 10 days from the time a person is exposed until symptoms begin. Symptoms usually begin 1 to 3 days after exposure to Streptococcus; usually 4 to 10 days after exposure to Staphylococcus.

**CONTAGIOUS PERIOD**

Until sores are healed or the person has been treated with antibiotics for 24 hours.

**EXCLUSION**

Childcare and School: If impetigo is confirmed by a health care provider, exclude until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated and sores are drying or improving.

**DIAGNOSIS**

Recommend parents/guardians call their health care provider if their child has open sores or an undiagnosed rash.

**TREATMENT**

Impetigo is treated with topical antibiotics (applied directly to the skin) when only a few sores are present. Oral or injectable antibiotics may be prescribed for more severe cases.

**PREVENTION/CONTROL**

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after contact with sores. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.**

- Wear disposable medical gloves or use cotton-tipped swabs if applying ointment to sores. Dispose of any soiled tissues, bandages, and gloves carefully.

- Cover sores whenever possible to prevent spread. Discourage children from scratching infected areas. Ask parents to trim child’s fingernails.

- Do not share towels, washcloths, or clothing.

- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.