



An Overview on Impetigo: Its Causes, Symptoms and Preventive Methods

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DESCRIPTION

Impetigo is a common and highly contagious skin infection that primarily affects children but can occur in individuals of all ages. It is characterized by red sores or blisters that often burst and develop a honey-colored crust. Although impetigo is generally not a serious condition, it can be uncomfortable and unsightly.

Causes of impetigo

Impetigo is primarily caused by bacteria, specifically two types: *Staphylococcus aureus* and streptococcus pyogenes (also known as Group A Streptococcus). These bacteria are commonly found on the skin and can enter the body through breaks or cuts in the skin. Impetigo can also develop when the bacteria enter through existing skin conditions like eczema, insect bites, or minor injuries. Poor hygiene practices can increase the risk of impetigo, but it can affect even the cleanest individuals.

Symptoms of impetigo

Impetigo manifests in several distinct symptoms:

Red sores or blisters: The initial sign of impetigo is the appearance of small, red sores or blisters, often on the face around the mouth and nose or on the hands. These sores are typically painless but may be itchy.

Bursting blisters: Over time, the blisters will burst, leaving behind wet, raw-looking areas of skin. The fluid from the blisters often oozes and forms a characteristic honey-colored crust, which gives impetigo its nickname "school sores."

Itching and discomfort: The presence of impetigo can cause mild to moderate itching and discomfort, especially if the crusts become thicker or if the infection spreads.

Enlargement and spread: If left untreated, impetigo can gradually spread to other areas of the body or to other individuals who come into close contact with the infected person.

Types of impetigo

There are two primary types of impetigo:

Non-bullous impetigo: This is the most common form of impetigo. It begins as small red sores that eventually rupture, forming a yellowish-brown crust. Non-bullous impetigo is often found around the mouth and nose but can appear anywhere on the body.

Bullous impetigo: This form is less common but typically affects children under the age of 2. It starts with larger, fluid-filled blisters that are clear and eventually turning cloudy and rupture, leaving a thin brown crust.

Prevention of impetigo

Preventing impetigo involves good hygiene practices and minimizing exposure to the bacteria responsible for the infection. Here are some preventive measures:

Hand washing: Regular and thorough hand washing with soap and water is essential, especially after touching open sores, using the bathroom, or before handling food.

Covering wounds and sores: Keep wounds, cuts, and insect bites covered with clean bandages until they heal to prevent bacterial entry.

Avoiding close contact: If someone in our household has impetigo, try to avoid close physical contact until the infection is no longer contagious.

Proper cleaning: Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and items, like doorknobs, toys, and bathroom fixtures, to prevent the spread of bacteria.

Impetigo is a common and generally mild skin infection, but it can be uncomfortable and contagious. Understanding the causes, symptoms, treatment options, and prevention measures is crucial to managing and preventing its spread. By maintaining good hygiene practices and seeking timely medical attention when needed, impetigo can be effectively treated, and its impact minimized.

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