

School Sores



What is it?

Impetigo, sometimes called school sores, is a highly contagious and common bacterial skin infection that is caused by streptococcus (strep) or staphylococcus (staph) bacteria. These bacteria normally live on the skin and in the nose and throat, but sometimes they can cause an infection, often when skin has been broken (for example, a scratch or bite). The infection causes fluid-filled sores and blisters on the skin; children scratching these blisters can transfer the contagious fluid onto other people or items.

Impetigo is not a serious condition for most children, but it can be very dangerous for newborn babies due to their inexperienced immune systems. If you suspect that your baby may have contracted impetigo, you should seek immediate medical assistance.

What are the symptoms?

The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne lists the following symptoms of impetigo: Impetigo may start with a blister or a group of blisters; The sores can be anywhere on the body, but are often on the face near the mouth and nose, or on the arms and legs; The blister bursts leaving a patch of red, wet skin, which weeps; The spot usually becomes coated with a tan or yellowish crust, making it look like it has been covered with honey; There can be small spots around the first spots, spreading outwards; Impetigo is usually itchy; The sore takes about one to three days to develop after contact with fluid or crusts from a sore; There is often superficial peeling on the edge.

What are the treatments?

Being a bacterial infection, impetigo responds best to antibiotics. Depending whether the infection is mild or more severe, your child's doctor may recommend either a prescription antibacterial cream or oral antibiotics. You will also need to help your child to gently wash their skin several times a day, preferably with an antibacterial soap, to remove crusts and drainage from the sores and blisters. The sores should then be covered with a waterproof bandage to help prevent the infection from spreading. Once your child has been on antibiotic treatment for 24 hours, they can return to school or childcare, however all sores and blisters need to be covered with a waterproof dressing. You will also need to change your child's bedding, towels, washers and pyjamas daily while the infection is present as well as take normal

Hygiene precautions to help prevent the spread to other family members.



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Our Country Practice



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(9am to 5pm - Monday to Friday)



Scrumptiddlyumptious *Pumpkin Soup*

- 1 Large (or 2 medium) Sweet Potato
- 1.5kg Pumpkin
- 1.5 litres Chicken Stock
- 1 Large Leek
- 5 Bacon Rashers
- 1 tbsp Sweet Chili Sauce



Peel and cut pumpkin and sweet potato into pieces and place in a large pot; add the chicken stock and bring to the boil. Remove the rind from the bacon and cut into pieces. Peel and finely slice the leek. Cook the leek in a little margarine until tender. Add the bacon pieces and when almost cooked, add the sweet chili sauce. Cook for a further 2 minutes and then add to the pumpkin pot. Simmer gently for 20 minutes. Blend with your 'Stickmaster' and serve with a dollop of cream or sour cream and fresh, crusty bread.

Should you have an urgent medical problem after hours, please contact Wellington District Hospital on (02) 6840 7200. Our doctors are on an after hours roster through the hospital.

Should you have any complaints or concerns, please feel free to speak to our Practice Manager.
(... or Healthcare Complaints on (02) 6885 7937)

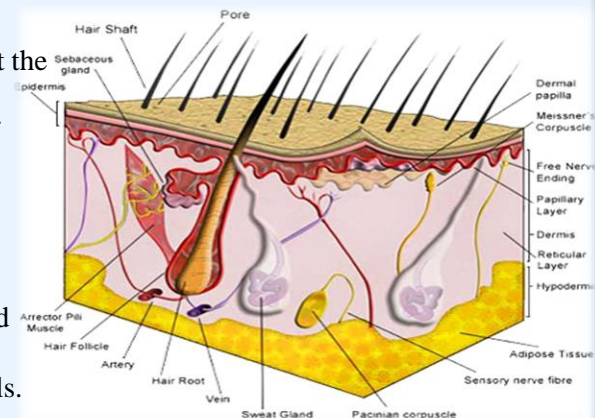
Introduction to Skin in Winter

During the winter months our skin is subject to the damaging and drying effects of cold, windy weather and the low humidity of dry indoor heating. Our efforts to stay warm with long, hot showers and internal heating tend to suck the moisture from our body, leaving skin dry, itchy and prone to cracking. Those with sensitive skin or skin conditions such as eczema and rosacea are particularly affected. Severely dry skin can crack and bleed, creating sites that can be further irritated by soaps and clothing, and also making you more vulnerable to infection. Thus, it is just as important to take extra care of your skin during this season as it is in the summertime.

The skin as a protective barrier

The **skin** is the largest organ of the body. Some of its primary functions are to act as a protective barrier against the external environment, as well as prevent water loss. The outer-most layer of the skin, known as the stratum corneum (SC), plays an instrumental role in protecting skin against moisture loss. The SC consists of a layer of cells surrounded by [lipids](#) (oils) such as ceramides, cholesterol and fatty acids. These lipids determine the moisturisation levels of the skin.

The skin produces less of these oils during the winter months, thus making the skin more susceptible to abnormal dryness, also known as [winter xerosis](#) or winter itch. Xerosis is characterized by roughness, itching, scaling and flaking. **Dry skin** tends to be more of a problem in older people because the skin is less able to hold its moisture, and the number of oil-producing [sebaceous glands](#) decreases with ageing. Dry skin also occurs more frequently among people who wash their hands several times a day, as this strips the skin of its natural oils.



Tips for preventing dry winter skin

The key to preventing dry skin is keep the moisture locked in. There are several precautions you can take to avoid dry, itchy winter skin and maintain soft moist skin during the cold season.

1 - Cut down on long, hot baths - Hot water removes the skin's natural oils very quickly, so having a long, hot shower can really deplete the skin of its natural moisture. Use warm water instead, and reduce the time spent in the bath or shower to a maximum of 10-15 minutes. In addition, try using a moisturising shower gel, or soaps that contain moisturisers. Super-fatted soaps are recommended because they have extra amounts of fatty acids (e.g. cocoa butter, coconut oil or lanolin). If you want to soak in a bath, use bath oils. After bathing, pat your skin dry (as opposed to rubbing) and moisturise within 3 minutes of stepping out of the shower.

2 - Moisturise regularly - This is one of the most effective ways of managing dry skin. The oilier and thicker the moisturiser, the better it protects the skin. Look for ingredients such as petrolatum, glycerin, mineral oil, linoleic acid, ceramides or dimethicone, which act to prevent moisture loss. Moisturisers containing alpha-hydroxy acid and urea help to soften the skin and remove surface scale. Lips also need to be protected, as they are easily prone to cracking and bleeding. Use a lip balm or sunscreen. For flaky, dry lips, a cream with a vitamin A derivative (retinol) will help reduce the build up of dry dead skin.

3 - Use a humidifier - This helps to add moisture to the air

4 - Choose skin friendly fabrics - Although woolly jumpers keep you nice and warm, they can be very irritating and can exacerbate dry, itchy skin. Instead, try to wear layers of other natural fibres (e.g. cotton or silk) which allow the skin to breathe and avoid overheating and sweating

5 - Turn down the heat - Hot air causes the blood vessels to dilate, which can stimulate itchiness. Cool air is more skin friendly, so turn down your heating and give your skin a break.

6 - Don't forget the sunscreen - Just because it's winter doesn't mean you can forget about the sun. The sun remains powerful all year round and is particularly glaring around snowy areas, so use at least an SPF 30+ sun lotion on exposed skin before you go out.