Impetigo

What is impetigo?
• Impetigo is a highly contagious, common skin infection caused by streptococcus (strep) or staphylococcus aureus (staph) bacteria.
• Impetigo usually does not penetrate intact skin. When you have breaks in the skin, i.e., bites, burns, or wounds, the bacteria enters the body and causes the infection.

What are the symptoms?
• Rash found anywhere on the skin, but most often on the face, lips, arms, or legs that spread to other areas.
• One or more blisters filled with pus, which are easy to pop.
• Itchy blisters filled with yellow or honey-colored fluid, which ooze and crust over.
• In infants, the skin is reddish or raw-looking where a blister has broken.

How does impetigo spread?
• Person-to-person: Open skin area has direct contact with the fluid that oozes from an impetigo blister.
• Contaminated articles-to-person: Open skin area is in contact with contaminated articles (such as bedding, towels, wash cloths, etc.).

How is impetigo treated?
• Your doctor will prescribe an antibacterial cream and possibly oral antibiotics.
• Wear gloves while applying the ointment and wash your hands (soap with running water for 20 seconds) afterwards.
• Wash the skin several times a day with antibacterial soap to remove crusts and drainage.
• Without proper treatment complications such as kidney damage or failure can occur.
• Children with impetigo should not return to school or day care until 24 hours after beginning antibacterial treatment or cleared by a healthcare provider.

How do I prevent the spread of impetigo?
• Do not share towels, clothing, razors, or other personal care products with others.
• If you have impetigo, always use a clean washcloth and towel each time you wash.
• Avoid touching oozing blisters.
• Avoid contact with newborn babies who are at a higher risk of being infected.
• Keep blisters loosely covered to minimize the spread of infection.
• Wash your hands (soap with running water for 20 seconds) after touching infected skin.

Where can I find more information?
• Go to ncbi.nlm.nih.gov and type impetigo in SEARCH box.