



**University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Abrons Student Health Center**

## **INSTRUCTION SHEET: IMPETIGO**

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed impetigo. Impetigo is an infection of the skin caused by bacteria (germs). The infection is easily treated, and rarely serious. Treatment consists of an antibiotic by mouth or an antibiotic ointment applied to the skin.

Impetigo is most common in young children. Children two to six years-old are most often affected, but impetigo can be seen in older children and even adults.

Impetigo is more common in warm climates and warm months of the year. Insect bites, more frequent in warm weather, play a part in causing impetigo. Bug bites and other small breaks in the skin allow germs to penetrate the protective outer layer of skin. The germs may multiply, resulting in small areas of infection.

The lesions of impetigo begin as tiny blisters. The blisters break, and a yellow crust surrounded by redness appears. The yellow crusts “weep” clear fluid.

Itching is the main symptom of impetigo. The lesions are not painful. Fever is unusual, as is a toxic (sick-looking) appearance.

The infection is contagious; impetigo is spread by direct contact (touching). A person is prone to infection if he/she has small breaks in the skin, and has physical contact with a person infected with impetigo.

### **MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT IMPETIGO:**

1. The entire skin surface should be cleaned daily with soap and water. A bath or shower with good cleaning works nicely.
2. An antibiotic by mouth, or topical (rubbed on) ointment is prescribed. If an antibiotic by mouth is prescribed, the medicine should be taken as directed, until gone. If ointment is prescribed, rub a light film onto the affected areas as directed, several times a day.
3. Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) or loratadine, antihistamines available over-the-counter, can be used to control itching. The main side effect of diphenhydramine is drowsiness. Loratadine is non-sedating.
4. If worsening of your condition occurs, seek *prompt* medical care with the Student Health Center or your personal/referral provider, or go to the nearest emergency department. Specifically, seek care if you develop a toxic (sick looking) appearance or fever greater than 101 degrees.