

# Cellulitis

Cellulitis is an inflammation of the skin and the tissues just below the skin (subcutaneous). It can affect all age groups, including children. Cellulitis is generally caused by an infection with bacteria. It can begin with a minor injury to the skin that is invaded by the bacteria. The infection leads to inflammation, which is the body's response to the infection. Cellulitis is not contagious and cannot be passed from one person to another.

Risk of getting cellulitis increases with chronic disease, such as diabetes, weak immune system, burns, skin disorders (eczema, psoriasis) or infections that cause skin symptoms (chicken pox) or poor blood circulation.

## **Possible signs of cellulitis include:**

- Tenderness, warmth, swelling and redness in an area of the skin
- There may be fluid or pus draining from the area
- Fever, chills, sweating and a general ill feeling
- Lymph nodes nearest the area may be swollen

Cellulitis is treated with antibiotics. Ensure that you take the entire course of antibiotics that are prescribed. With treatment, symptoms should begin to improve in 2-3 days and you should have complete recovery in 7-10 days. You will need to rest as your body is fighting an infection. Elevate the affected area and try not to move the area as this can decrease swelling and improve healing. Sometimes if there is fluid but it is not draining, it may need to be opened and drained (this is called an abscess).

If cellulitis is not treated, it can lead to blood poisoning, infection of the brain, bone, muscle, and tissue beneath the affected area.

## **Tips to prevent cellulitis:**

- Keep the skin clean
- Avoid skin damage
- Wear shoes that fit well. Avoid going barefoot in areas that may increase risk of cuts
- If the skin is injured, wash the area with soap and water. Continue to check the area and if increasing redness occurs, seek medical attention
- Avoid swimming if you have sores on your skin

**Contact our clinic or go to the Emergency Room if you develop new onset fevers, chills, or increasing redness of the area despite taking antibiotics. Also return if there is no improvement of your symptoms in 3-5 days after starting the antibiotics.**

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