



Cellulitis

You have an infection of your skin and soft tissue, called “cellulitis”. It is usually caused by bacteria. Bacteria can enter your skin through minor scrapes, cuts, scratches, bites, or through dry hands / feet / nails.

Cellulitis can cause skin:

- redness
- swelling
- pain
- warmth
- rash appearance
- fever / chills
- nausea / vomiting

With appropriate treatment, the infection should improve.

Sometimes cellulitis is treated with antibiotics taken by mouth, and sometimes an IV is required.

How to Care for Yourself at Home

- + Take the medications exactly as prescribed by your doctor (finish them even if you feel better)
- + If your infection is on your arm or leg, rest the arm or leg up on a pillow to help reduce swelling.
- + Avoid pools and hot tubs during treatment.
- + If there is any drainage from the infected area:
 - Keep the area covered with the dressing suggested by your nurse or doctor.
 - Wash your hands before and after caring for the infected area.

- If changing the bandage at home, wrap the old bandage in a plastic bag and put it in the garbage.

When to Get Help

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if:

- + You have severe or worsening pain.
- + Your skin gets blisters or dark purple areas.
- + You have red streaks coming from your infected areas or the redness increases in size.
- + You have a fever over 38°C.
- + You have chills or sweating.
- + You have nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) and vomiting (throwing up)
- + You have stiffness in nearby joints.

Ways To Prevent Cellulitis

- + Clean breaks in the skin well with soap and water
- + Protect any breaks in the skin with a bandage.
- + If you have diabetes, examine your feet and legs daily for breaks in the skin.

To Learn More Ask

- + Your Primary Care Provider.
- + HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca.