

# 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.



## What to Expect

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.



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### Recommended Follow-Up

Follow up in \_\_ days.

Name of Provider

Reason

Date/Time

Location

Contact Info

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## When to Get Help

**Go to the nearest Emergency Department or Urgent Care 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.
- Increasing numbness, tingling or weakness.

The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team. This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

Last Reviewed: May 28, 2024 | Page 1 of 2



**EMERGENCY CARE BC**  
Provincial Health Services Authority

[EmergencyCareBC.ca](https://www.emergencycarebc.ca)

### To Learn More:

- Ask your health care provider.
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca).



## 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.
- Avoid moving the infected area a lot.
- 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.

### WAYS TO PREVENT CELLULITIS

- Clean breaks in the skin well with soap and water.
- Protect any breaks in the skin with a bandage. Change the bandages as directed by your doctor.
- If you have diabetes, examine your feet and legs daily for breaks in the skin.
- Maintain adequate hydration and a balanced diet to support your immune system.
- Moisturize your skin regularly and be careful when trimming your fingernails and toenails.
- Wear protective equipment (e.g., gloves) when engaging in activities that may irritate the skin.

Find this information sheet on the ECBC website:

[https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical\\_resource/patient-information-sheet/cellulitis/](https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/cellulitis/)

### Notes:

### Additional Information

- Watch this video for further information on cellulitis care: <https://youtu.be/r-dLBqBly4Q>

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