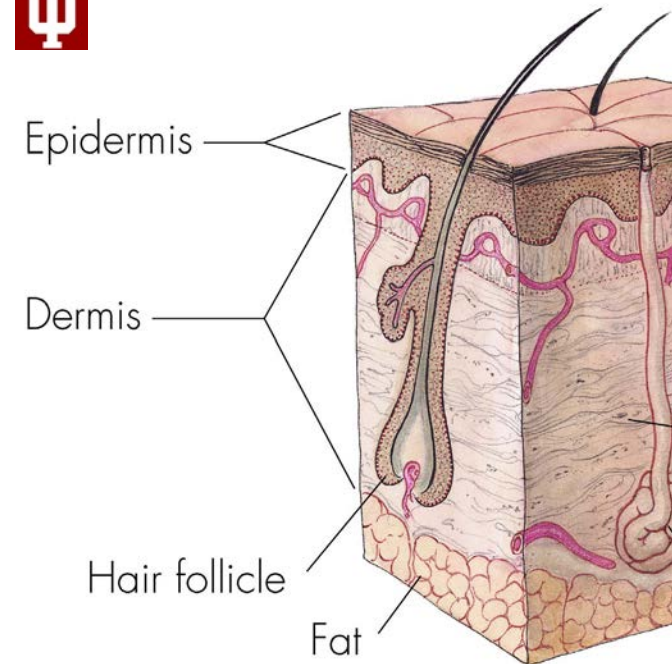


SKIN INFECTIONS AND DISEASE PREVENTION

Environmental Health and Safety



SKIN INFECTIONS

Skin infections start when bacteria get into a cut or scrape. Bacteria live on everyone's skin and usually cause no harm.

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to as "staph," is a common type of bacteria that can live harmlessly on the skin or in the nose of 25 to 35 percent of healthy people (this is often referred to as being "colonized" with the germ).

Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infection in the United States, but most of these infections are minor, such as pimples or boils. Most of these infections can be treated without antibiotics, however, some staph infections can cause serious infections, such as pneumonia, bloodstream, bone and joint infections, and surgical wound infections.

Staph infections may spread to other people by skin-to-skin contact and from shared items such as bedding, towels, soap, clothes and sports equipment.



Staph Infection

SOME COMMON SKIN INFECTIONS CAUSED BY STAPH ARE:

BOILS: tender, red lumps that swell and get white heads like very big pimples. Boils form on oily or moist skin such as the neck, armpits, groin and buttock. They may break open and ooze pus or blood.



Boil

IMPETIGO: blisters with fluid in them, which pop and get a yellow crust. Children often get it on the face. It can be spread by scratching.



Impetigo

INFECTED HAIR ROOTS (FOLLICLES): small bumps under the skin at the base of the hair. They may itch. Staph infections are becoming harder to treat. Penicillin and some other antibiotics used to kill bacteria may no longer work against staph germs. These staph germs are "resistant" to the antibiotics. They are called MRSA (methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus), and they are resistant to all penicillin-type antibiotics. Skin infections from MRSA can develop into more serious, even life-threatening, problems such as infections of the heart, blood, and bones.

Skin infections should be brought to the attention of your health care provider so they don't spread or cause more serious problems.

Only take antibiotics when they are prescribed by your health care provider. Taking them when they are not needed can create stronger germs, like MRSA. If you get a prescription, always finish the whole bottle—the last few pills kill the toughest germs.

SURPRISING FACT

The best way to prevent skin infections is simple – wash your hands using liquid soap not bar soap. Washing your hands often with soap and warm water also helps prevent colds and flu.

WHAT TO DO

- » Wash cuts, scrapes and sores with soap and water, then keep them clean and dry. Cover them with bandages until they are healed.
- » Avoid contact with other people's cuts or sores and any materials that have come in contact with them.
- » Avoid sharing personal items such as soap, towels and razors.
- » Clean and wash sports clothing and equipment after each use.
- » Avoid whirlpools, hydrotherapy pools, cold tubs, swimming pools and other common tubs if you have an open wound.
- » Use a barrier (e.g. clothing or a towel) between your skin, common use areas (desks, benches, etc) and shared equipment.

- » Keep your environment clean by wiping frequently touched surfaces (such as counter tops, doorknobs and light switches) with a disinfectant.

SHORT LIST OF DISEASE GERMS ALSO FOUND ON HUMAN HANDS

- » **SHIGELLA FLEXNERI:** causes vomiting, headache, diarrhea
- » **STREPTOCOCCUS PYROGENS:** causes tonsillitis, sore throats, scarlet fever, impetigo
- » **SALMONELLA:** causes severe diarrhea, stomach pain, dizziness, fever
- » **RHINO VIRUS:** over 200 strains causing great misery in the form of colds and all that they bring
- » **PROTEUS VULGARIS:** urinary tract infections
- » **HEPATITIS A:** vomiting, liver disorders, jaundice
- » **ESCHERICHIA COLI 0157:** diarrhea, kidney failure, uncontrollable fever, death
- » **ROTAVIRUS:** 55,000 children hospitalized with this each year
- » **ECHOVIRUS:** meningitis, encephalitis, neonatal sepsis, myocarditis and chronic infection
- » **COXSACKIE VIRUS:** sore throat, abdominal discomfort or nausea

(Consider all the human misery that could be avoided by hand washing!)

CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF...

- » You have signs of infection, such as pain, redness, swelling and heat, and oozing pus or blood.
- » New symptoms develop during or after you get treated.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- » University of Maryland Sports Medicine Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

IUS ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
Room 129 Hausfeldt Building 812-941-2989

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