

Cellulitis

Call your child's regular doctor NOW (night or day) if your child:

- Looks or acts very sick.
- Is limp or very weak.
- Cries uncontrollably for more than an hour.
- Has a temperature over 104° F (40°C) or feels very hot at any age.
- Is less than 3 months old and has a temperature over 100.3°F (38°C)
- Has facial or eye cellulitis and has increasing swelling around the face or eye.

Call your child's regular doctor if:

- You find a blister or boil on the infected area, the area of redness is spreading, or there are red streaks coming from the infected site.
- Your child has a fever for more than two days after starting antibiotics.
- The joint or bone underneath the infected skin becomes painful after the skin has healed.
- Your child has new, unexplained symptoms.

Cellulitis is an infection of the skin and the tissues below the skin. Cellulitis may occur anywhere on your child's body, including his or her face and around the eye. Nearly any cut or injury, such as a scrape or a bite, can lead to cellulitis if it is not kept clean. Cellulitis on the face can spread quickly, especially in small children.

Complications that may happen if the infection spreads include:

- Abscess
- Blood infection (bacteremia) - This can then spread to other parts of the body.
- Bone infection (osteomyelitis)
- Lymph node infection

Your child will probably have a fever with cellulitis. Cellulitis does not spread from person to person. Your child can get cellulitis more than once. With medicine, cellulitis should be gone in 7 to 10 days. Your child may be able to be treated at home. Sometimes children need to be in the hospital for treatment.

What you can do to help

- If the infection is on your child's arm or leg, keep it raised by placing it on a pillow or chair. This helps lessen pain and swelling. This works best if the arm or leg is raised above the level of the heart.
- Do not allow your child to go swimming until the skin is no longer infected.

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To prevent wounds from getting infected

1. Clean the area well with soap and warm water.
2. Use an antibiotic ointment and cover the area with a bandage.
3. Do not allow your child to rub or scratch the affected area.
4. Make sure to take your child to the doctor for any deep cuts or puncture wounds.

Warm or cool, wet dressings may be ordered to help treat the cellulitis. Follow instructions closely.

Cool water soaks or compresses cause blood vessels to constrict (get small) which helps lessen inflammation (swelling, pain, and redness). Soak a clean cloth in cool water, wring it out a little, and put it on the injured area. Do this for 15 to 30 minutes, 2 to 4 times a day.

Warm water soaks or compresses bring blood to the sore area to relax the muscles. A warm moist compress is a small towel dampened with warm water. Wring it out a little, and put it on the injured area. Do this for 15 to 30 minutes, 2 to 4 times a day.

For General Health Information and Resources:

Call or visit the [Family Resource Center](#), a health information library on the 3rd floor of the hospital. Call 314.454.2350, email at frc@bjc.org, or check out the FREE [St. Louis Children's Hospital Kid Care App](#).

