**Hydrogen peroxide 1% cream for impetigo - patient information leaflet**

Your healthcare professional has diagnosed impetigo. This leaflet explains how to treat your impetigo and how to stop it from spreading to other areas of the body and to other people.

**What is impetigo?**

Impetigo is a skin infection that can spread very easily. It most often affects the face, arms and legs, causing red sores and blisters that can be itchy and painful. Impetigo can affect anyone but is most common in young children. Impetigo usually heals completely without scarring. Serious long-term effects are rare.

**Why am I not getting an antibiotic for impetigo?**

You may be offered an antiseptic cream, hydrogen peroxide 1% cream, to treat your impetigo. Hydrogen peroxide 1% cream works as well as an antibiotic cream or gel if you have a type of impetigo known as non-bullous impetigo which is on a small area of your body and you are feeling generally well.

If a course of hydrogen peroxide 1% cream does not help or is unsuitable for you or if the impetigo is more severe or widespread, then you should be offered antibiotics, either applied directly to the skin as a cream / gel or as tablets.

Both the NHS and health organisations across the world are trying to reduce the use of antibiotics, especially for infections that are not usually serious. Using antibiotics when they are not needed means they may not work as well in the future.

**How do I use hydrogen peroxide 1% (Crystacide) cream?**

* Wash your hands.
* Using antibacterial liquid soap/skin wash and water, gently remove the impetigo crusts.
* Pat dry the area with a clean cloth.
* Apply the hydrogen peroxide 1% cream to the impetigo patches and the skin around them. Avoid applying to healthy skin or to large or deep wounds.
* Wash your hands.
* Repeat this two or three times a day for five days as advised by your healthcare professional.
* Sometimes a longer course of seven days is needed, and your healthcare professional will advise you on this.
* A dry film may appear on the skin after application, this can be washed off with water.
* Avoid the eye area. If you accidentally get the cream in your eyes, wash it out with plenty of cold water straight away.
* Hydrogen peroxide 1% cream may bleach fabrics.

The patient information leaflet which comes with the cream has a lot of useful information and you should read this and keep it for future reference.

**How can I stop impetigo from spreading?**

Impetigo is a bacterial infection that can spread quickly. You should treat it as directed by your healthcare professional.

You can help your impetigo heal and stop it spreading to other parts of your body or to other people. Here are some things you can do while it’s still contagious:

* Wash the affected areas with soap and water.
* Wash your hands regularly, and after touching a patch of impetigo.
* Avoid scratching the areas with impetigo.
* Do not share towels, face cloths, and other personal care products.
* Wash your flannels, sheets and towels at a high temperature.
* Wash or wipe down toys with detergent and warm water if your children have impetigo.
* Do not go to the gym.
* Do not play contact sports like football.
* Do not prepare food for other people.
* Do not have close contact with children or people with diabetes or weakened immune systems (if they’re having chemotherapy, for example)

**Can children go to school with impetigo? Do I have to stay away from work?**

Children and adults should stay away from school and other childcare facilities or work until the impetigo sores or blisters are healed, dry and crusted over or 48 hours after starting treatment.

If you are a food handler, you are required by law to inform your employer straight away if you have impetigo.

**What should I do if my impetigo doesn’t get better after treatment?**

You should see your healthcare professional if the impetigo doesn’t improve after you have finished a course of treatment or if it suddenly gets much worse at any time or you feel very unwell.

If your impetigo keeps coming back your healthcare professional might take a swab from your skin for testing to find out which type of antibiotic might work best.

**Where can I get more information about impetigo?**

The NHS website has more information about [impetigo](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/impetigo/).