Management of Individuals with skin and soft tissue infections

Mild skin and soft tissue infections

- Infected scratches
- Insect bites
- Furuncles
- Small abscesses (<2cm)
- Boils

*and*

Patient NOT systemically unwell (ie fever)

Moderate / recurrent skin and soft tissue infections

- Cellulitis
- Moderate abscesses (2-3cm)
- Multiple documented recurrences of infection

*and*

Minimal or no systemic symptoms

Severe infections

- Extensive cellulitis
- Large (>4cm) or multiple (>3) abscesses
- Osteomyelitis/septic arthritis
- Necrotising pneumonia
- Necrotising fasciitis

*and/or*

Patient septic or unwell

Determine if other cases exist among contacts

- Drain abscesses
- Cover draining wounds
- Advise patient on wound care and hygiene
- NO antibiotics required (unless co-morbidities or unable to drain abscess)
- Maintain close follow up
- Provide *boils and skin infections factsheet*

- Drain abscesses
- Take a *wound swab* for culture and antimicrobial susceptibility testing
- Cover draining wounds
- Advise patient on wound care and hygiene
- Commence antibiotic therapy as indicated
- Maintain close follow up
- Provide *boils and skin infections factsheet* (or *MRSA factsheet* if diagnosis confirmed)

- Refer to hospital emergency department for assessment and further management

Contact the public health unit if a cluster of two or more associated cases is suspected

Important information

Patient education

- Provide information regarding hygiene and the importance of ensuring wounds are completely covered
- Reinforce frequent hand washing and importance of not sharing personal items such as towels, bars of soap, razors or tooth brushes
- Advise to return if systemic symptoms develop, or no improvement in 48 hours

Antibiotic Therapy

- The decision to use antibiotics is dependant on severity of illness or co-morbidities and should be guided by the current guidelines
- Antibiotic therapy should be adjusted when results of culture and susceptibility are available
- Monitor response to therapy and review if no improvement or symptoms worsen within 48 hours