

## Boils and Impetigo

### What is a boil?

A boil is an infection of the skin, usually caused by Staphylococcus bacteria. Boils are tender, swollen sores, which are full of pus. The tenderness usually goes away, once the boil bursts and the pus and fluid drain.

### What is Impetigo?

Impetigo is an infection of the skin caused by either Staphylococcus or Streptococcus bacteria. The symptoms of impetigo are either small blisters or flat, honey-coloured crusty sores, on the skin. Impetigo is sometimes called 'school sores'.

### How are Boils and Impetigo treated?

If you have the symptoms of boils or impetigo:

- see your doctor for advice on the treatment of both
- if sores are small or few, local antiseptic cream and hot compresses may help
- your doctor may prescribe you antibiotic tablets or ointment. It is important to take the full course of antibiotics. If you don't the sores may come back

### How are Boils and Impetigo spread?

Boils and impetigo are spread between people by:

- touching or bursting a boil or impetigo
- using soiled towels, clothes, or bed sheets that have been used by a person with a boil or impetigo
- using grooming items (for example, nail scissors, tweezers and razors) that have been used by a person with a boil or impetigo.

### How can you stop the spread of Boils and Impetigo?

#### Wash your hands

Hand washing is the most important way to prevent the spread of boils and impetigo. Wash all parts of your hands (including between the fingers and under fingernails) vigorously with soap and running water for 10-15 seconds. Rinse well and dry your hands (with a paper towel if you can). Wash your hands:

- before and after touching or dressing an infected area or wound
- after going to the toilet
- after blowing your nose
- before handling or eating food
- before handling newborn babies
- after touching or handling unwashed clothing or linen
- after handling animals or animal waste

### **Cover boils and impetigo**

- Cover boils and impetigo with a watertight dressing during the daytime
- Children with impetigo should not go to school or childcare until after they have been on treatment for one full day

### **Do not share**

- soiled towels, clothes or bed sheets. If you share a bed with someone, keep sores or wounds dressed overnight
  - grooming items such as nail scissors, tweezers, razors and toothbrushes
- For further information please contact your local public health unit, community health centre, or doctor.

### **Further information - Public Health Units in NSW**

For more information please contact your doctor, local public health unit or community health centre – see under ‘NSW Government’ at the front of the White Pages.

#### **Metropolitan Areas**

Central Sydney	9515 3180
South Eastern Sydney	9382 8333
Northern Sydney	9477 9400
South Western Sydney	9828 5944
Western Sydney	9840 3603
Wentworth	4734 2022

#### **Rural Areas**

Central Coast	4349 4845
Mid North Coast	6588 2750
Mid Western	6339 5548
Hunter	4924 6477
Illawarra	4255 2200
New England	6766 2288
Northern Rivers	6620 7500
Macquarie	6841 2216
Southern	4827 3428
Greater Murray	6021 4799
Far West	(08) 8080 1499

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