

Cellulitis

Cellulitis is an infection of the deep layers of skin. A break in the skin, such as a cut or scratch, can let bacteria under the skin. If the bacteria get to deep layers of the skin, it can be serious. If not treated, cellulitis can get into the bloodstream and lymph nodes. The infection can then spread throughout the body. This causes serious illness.

Cellulitis causes the affected skin to become red, swollen, warm, and sore. The reddened areas have a visible border. An open sore may leak fluid (pus). You may have a fever, chills, and pain.

Cellulitis is treated with antibiotics taken for 7 to 10 days. An open sore may be cleaned and covered with cool wet gauze. Symptoms should get better 1 to 2 days after treatment is started. Make sure to take all the antibiotics for the full number of days until they are gone. Keep taking the medicine even if your symptoms go away.

Home care

Follow these tips:

- Limit the use of the part of your body with cellulitis.
- If the infection is on your leg, keep your leg raised while sitting. This will help to reduce swelling.
- Take all of the antibiotic medicine exactly as directed until it is gone. Do not miss any doses, especially during the first 7 days. Don't stop taking the medicine when your symptoms get better.
- Keep the affected area clean and dry.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after touching your skin. Anyone else who touches your skin should also wash his or her hands. Don't share towels.

Follow-up care

Follow up with your healthcare provider, or as advised. If your infection does not go away on the first antibiotic, your healthcare provider will prescribe a different one.

When to seek medical advice

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of these occur:

- Red areas that spread
- Swelling or pain that gets worse
- Fluid leaking from the skin (pus)
- Fever higher of 100.4° F (38.0° C) or higher after 2 days on antibiotics

intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions.