

Prevention

It is best to wash any cuts, grazes, insect bites or spots under running tap water and cover with a plaster or dressing if possible.

This will reduce the risk of scratching, which can lead to infection.

Keep your fingernails short and clean at all times.

Treatment

Many cases of cellulitis resolve with a course of oral antibiotics but occasionally intravenous (into a vein) antibiotics may have to be administered.

This can usually be done by a qualified nurse who is trained in the assessment of cellulitis and the administration of antibiotics within your own home.

Useful information

For more information about the Intravenous Therapy Service contact the IV Therapy Team:

St Helens & Knowsley Tel: 01744 626702

Information for Patients with Cellulitis

This leaflet can be made available in alternative languages / formats on request.

如有需要，本传单可提供其他语言/版式
此單張的其他語言/格式版本可按要求提供

Na żądanie ta ulotka może zostać udostępniona w innych językach/formatach.

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What is Cellulitis?

Cellulitis is a bacterial infection of the deep layer of skin (dermis) and the layer of fat and soft tissues (the subcutaneous tissues) that lie underneath the skin

Symptoms

The main symptoms include:

- Redness and inflammation of the skin
- Red streaking of the skin
- The affected area spreading and getting bigger
- Warmness to the touch
- Swelling around the infected area
- Pain or tenderness
- Drainage or leaking of yellow clear fluid or pus from the skin
- Glands near the infected area become swollen and tender
- Fever or cold (chills)
- Generally feeling unwell.

The nearest glands to the infected area may swell and become tender because they are fighting off the infection to stop it spreading to other parts of the body.

For example:

- The glands in the groin may swell during a cellulitis of the leg
- Cellulitis on the face may cause enlargement of a lymph node in front of the ear or in the neck.

Cellulitis is not to be confused with cellulite, which is a cosmetic problem.

A variety of bacteria groups live on the skin's surface but do not normally cause any problems.

Usually the bacteria are not concentrated enough to do any harm, but sometimes they pass deeper into the skin and establish an infection.

Two of these groups of microorganisms, streptococci and staphylococci, are generally the main cause of cellulitis.

These two groups are among the most common bacteria that cause infections in humans.

The bacteria enter the skin through any damaged areas, like a spot, cut, wound or via a skin condition such as eczema or a leg ulcer.

When it is inside the skin, the bacteria produce powerful enzymes that break down the natural barriers that normally prevent bacteria spreading in the tissue.

This allows infection and inflammation to spread. Any area of the body can be affected but the leg is the most common region.

Causes

You can be vulnerable to cellulitis if you have experienced trauma to the skin or have other medical problems such as the following:

- Poorly controlled diabetes
- Skin disorders, such as eczema, psoriasis or severe acne
- Obesity
- Poor immune system, for example, if you have HIV/AIDS or take steroids
- Circulatory problems, such as poor venous or lymphatic drainage or varicose veins
- Athlete's foot
- Foreign objects in the skin
- Liver disease, such as cirrhosis or chronic hepatitis
- Infections related to a surgical procedure
- Have previously had an occurrence of cellulitis.

Chronic venous insufficiency can lead to skin discolouration, inflammatory dermatitis, recurrent or chronic cellulitis and ulceration.

Although a break in the skin is found to be the origin of most cases of cellulitis, sometimes the infection occurs for no apparent reason without a break in the skin being found.