

Emergency Services

Cellulitis

You have an infection of the deepest layer of your skin. This is called cellulitis (sounds like sell-you-light-iss). It is usually caused by bacteria.

Cellulitis can occur anywhere on the body, but is most common on the face, legs, feet, hands, and arms. The bacteria can enter your skin through any break in the skin such as a cut, scratch, or bite.

With treatment, the infection usually takes 7 to 10 days to go away.

When to get help

See your family doctor or go to a walk-in clinic if you notice any of the following:

- You have a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F).
- You have chills or sweating.
- You are feeling sick to your stomach (nausea) or throwing up (vomiting).
- You have stiffness of your joints.
- You have red streaks coming from your infected area or the redness increases in size.
- Your pain gets worse.
- You get blisters over the infected area.

How to take care of yourself at home

- Take antibiotics exactly the way they are prescribed by the doctor. You must finish taking all the pills – even if you feel better.
- If we need to give you antibiotics directly into your bloodstream, **you must** return to the hospital once or twice a day for antibiotic treatment.

Return to: _____

Date and time: _____

- If your infection is on your arm or leg, rest the arm or leg up on a pillow to help reduce swelling.
- If there is any drainage coming from the infected area:
 - Keep the area covered with the dressing suggested by the doctor or nurse in Emergency.
 - Wash your hands before and after caring for the infected area.
 - If you change the bandage at home, wrap the old bandage in a plastic bag and place it in the garbage.
 - **Do not** swim or go in a hot tub.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day.

Cellulitis - *continued*

Ways to Prevent Cellulitis

- Clean any breaks in the skin really well using soap and water.
- Keep any break in your skin (such as a cut, scrape, or scratch) clean and protected with a bandage.
- If you have diabetes, examine your feet and legs daily for any breaks in the skin.

What to watch for

You might have a cellulitis in your skin if you notice:

- redness
- swelling
- pain or tenderness
- skin that is warmer than normal
- tight, glossy looking surface to the skin
- skin rash that happens suddenly or spreads quickly

You may also notice these signs of infection:

- fever
- chills
- feeling sick to your stomach (nauseated) or throwing up (vomiting)

To learn more, it's good to ask

- Your family doctor
- Your pharmacist
- Fraser Health Virtual Care
1-800-314-0999 or live chat online at fraserhealth.ca/virtualcare
10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., daily
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online at HealthLinkBC.ca