

Healthy Skin

These things help keep your child's skin healthy:

- Eating healthy food like meat, fruit and vegetables.
- Drinking plenty of water.
- Getting plenty of sleep.
- Washing and drying hands after using the toilet and before eating.
- Keeping skin clean.
- Washing clothes, towels and sheets regularly.
- Keeping your child's nails short and clean.
- Not scratching skin or sores.
- Keeping skin cuts and sores clean and covered.
- Treating pets for fleas.

Take your child to a doctor or nurse if your child has a sore or wound that:

- Is bigger than the size of a 10 cent coin (about 1.5 cm).
- Is getting bigger.
- Has pus.
- Has red streaks coming from it.
- Is not getting better after two days.
- Is close to the eye.
- Won't stop bleeding.

If skin infections are not treated, they can lead to other serious health problems. Your child may end up in hospital with a serious skin infection or blood poisoning which can hurt their lungs, kidneys, joints, muscles, bones and brain.

What causes skin infections?

- Infections are caused by bacteria (germs), viruses and insect poisons.
- There are good and bad bacteria on our skin and in our environment.
- Sometimes your child gets a skin infection, such as a boil, from bad bacteria which is on their skin or in the environment. This small infection can heal or it might get more serious and grow bigger and spread into your child's body and blood.
- Sometimes your child might have a cut, scratch or insect bite. This type of wound may heal if it is cleaned and covered. If the wound gets infected with bad bacteria your child can get an infection like cellulitis (you say, sell-u-ly-tis) or impetigo (you say, im-pa-ty-go).

How to clean infected skin

- It is important to clean infected skin because this will help stop an infection growing or spreading to more areas.
- Ask your child to soak in a warm bath or put their infected skin into a bucket of warm water for at least 15 minutes. You can use a small amount of soap to clean around the infected skin.
- If your child has dry or sensitive skin, or eczema, use aqueous cream or soap-free cleansers and shampoos instead of soap.
- Use a soft clean cloth to wipe away any pus or blood from the infected skin.
- Pat the infected skin dry with a clean cloth or towel.
- Cover the infection with a clean dressing, plaster or piece of cloth. If possible, use something that won't stick to the infection. Covering the infected skin helps it to heal, stops bad bacteria from getting into the skin and stops the infection from spreading.
- A child with an infection should not share their bath water, towel or clothes with other people.

Ask your doctor or public health nurse for more ideas for cleaning skin.