Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Cellulitis

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Patient Information

Community React Team Leaflet

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What is Cellulitis?

Cellulitis is a bacterial infection of the skin and surrounding tissues. Cellulitis can occur on any area of your body, but the leg is the most common site.

How do you get Cellulitis?

Your skin acts as a natural barrier to protect you from many types of bacteria carried on the skin. Bacteria can enter through damaged or broken areas of skin, such as a cut, graze,

bite, or skin ulcer. It can also enter the body if you have a skin condition such as eczema or athlete's foot. Usually, these bacteria do not cause any harm, but if it enters deeper into the skin, it can cause an infection.

Who is at risk of developing Cellulitis?

Anyone can be affected by Cellulitis, but it is more common in people who have the following conditions:

- Diabetes mellitus
- Neuropathy (Poor circulation)
- Chronic renal or liver disease
- Obesity
- Chickenpox (varicella)
- Lymphoedema - fluid build-up under the skin
- Lymphadenectomy - surgical removal of one or more groups of lymph nodes
- Post venectomy status - vein stripping
- Chronic steroid use
- Immunocompromised states
- Alcohol misuse.

What are the symptoms?

Cellulitis affects your skin in several ways and can cause it to become:

- Red
- Painful
- Swollen
- Tender
- Hot to touch.

Cellulitis can make you feel generally unwell and cause symptoms such as:

- Fever
- Nausea
- Shivering and chills.

These symptoms may occur before or after your skin symptoms develop.

What treatment is available?

Treatment depends upon the severity of the infection. Many people will recover with a course of antibiotics. If the Cellulitis is not improving with tablets, you may be offered antibiotic injections.

How can I help?

- Drink plenty of water to help prevent dehydration.
- If your leg is affected by Cellulitis keep it elevated; this should make it feel more comfortable and help reduce the swelling.
- Keep your fingernails short and clean to reduce the risk of damaging your skin.
- Wash your hands at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Keep your skin moisturised if it is dry or prone to cracking.
- Keep any cuts, grazes, or bites clean. Wash damaged skin under running tap water and, if needed, apply antiseptic cream.
- Keep the wound covered either with a plaster or dressing if it becomes wet or dirty; this will reduce the risk of scratching and help to create a barrier against bacteria entering your skin.
- Cellulitis can be painful so take regular pain relief if needed.

Further information and advice

Seek immediate medical advice if antibiotics are not tolerated, or the cellulitis becomes worse or if your symptoms worsen or new symptoms develop. If you require any further information, help or advice please contact Health Professionals. Please leave a message on the answer machine and we will get back to you.

Contact information

Please contact Health Professionals on:
Telephone: 03007071221
Operating hours: seven days a week, between 8am and 8pm.
Outside these operating hours please ring 111 for clinical advice.

Further information available:

- Reference: https://cks.nice.org.uk/cellulitis-acute
- www.patient.co.uk – Cellulitis Patient Information Leaflet

- NHS Choices – Cellulitis symptoms



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