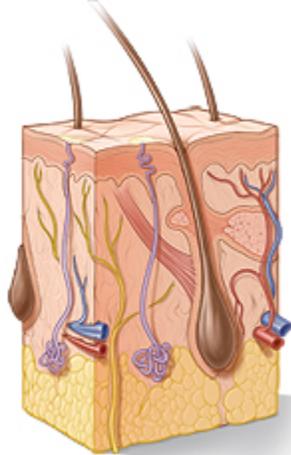


Cellulitis: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions



Cellulitis is a skin infection. It often occurs after a break in the skin from a scrape, cut, bite, or puncture, or after a rash.

The doctor has checked you carefully, but problems can develop later. If you notice any problems or new symptoms, **get medical treatment right away**.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take your antibiotics as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- Prop up the infected area on pillows to reduce pain and swelling. Try to keep the area above the level of your heart as often as you can.
- If your doctor told you how to care for your wound, follow your doctor's instructions. If you did not get instructions, follow this general advice:
 - Wash the wound with clean water 2 times a day. Don't use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol, which can slow healing.
 - You may cover the wound with a thin layer of petroleum jelly, such as Vaseline, and a nonstick bandage.
 - Apply more petroleum jelly and replace the bandage as needed.
- Be safe with medicines. Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.

To prevent cellulitis in the future

- Try to prevent cuts, scrapes, or other injuries to your skin. Cellulitis most often occurs where there is a break in the skin.
- If you get a scrape, cut, mild burn, or bite, wash the wound with clean water as soon as you can to help avoid infection. Don't use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol, which can slow healing.
- If you have swelling in your legs (edema), support stockings and good skin care may help prevent leg sores and cellulitis.
- Take care of your feet, especially if you have diabetes or other conditions that increase the risk of infection. Wear shoes and socks. Do not go barefoot. If you have athlete's foot or other skin problems on your feet, talk to your doctor about how to treat them.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs that your infection is getting worse, such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
 - Red streaks leading from the area.
 - Pus draining from the area.
 - A fever.
- You get a rash.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You are not getting better after 1 day (24 hours).
- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patientEd>

Enter **X309** in the search box to learn more about **"Cellulitis: Care Instructions."**

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