

Looking after
your **child's**
skin
and treating
skin infections

A guide for
parents and
families

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.

Your child should have all infected skin covered if they are going to school, kura or kohanga.

Things you could ask your child's doctor or nurse

What type of infection is it?

How do I tell if the infection is getting better or worse?

What sort of medicine is it (pills, liquid, cream) and how do I use it?

Are there any side effects from the medicine?

Who do I call if it gets worse?

How often do I change the plaster or dressing?

How do I clean it?

When can my child go back to school?

When can my child play sport?

How do I stop my child from getting this infection again?

Your question

Do I need to treat the rest of the family – or how do I stop them getting this infection?

Your question

Washing and drying hands

1.



Wet your hands under clean running water. Use warm water if available

2.



Put soap on your hands and wash for 20 seconds. Liquid soap is best

3.



Rub hands together until the soap makes bubbles

4.



Rub on both sides of both hands...

5.



and in between fingers and thumbs...

6.



and round and round both hands

7.



Rinse all the soap off under clean running water. Use warm water if available

8.



Dry your hands all over for 20 seconds. Using a paper towel is best (or, if at home, a clean dry towel)

Wash hands for 20 seconds

Dry hands for 20 seconds

Always wash and dry your hands ...

Before

- ▶ eating or preparing food

After

- ▶ sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose
- ▶ playing outside
- ▶ touching animals
- ▶ going to the toilet

Wash and dry hands before and after touching infected skin

Boils



A boil starts as a red lump or pimple with red skin around it. A boil can have white or yellow pus in the centre. It might be itchy or a bit painful. A boil usually starts around a hair follicle (where a hair grows out of the skin).

What to do

- **Go to the doctor immediately if a boil is near the eye.**
- Check and clean boils every day.
- Soak the boil in a warm bath or put a towel soaked in warm water on the boil for 20 minutes.
- If boil bursts, wipe away pus, fluid or blood with clean tissue or a cloth soaked in water and antiseptic.
- Wash cloths and towels after each use .
- Make sure your child wears clean clothes every day.
- Wash your hands before and after touching the boil.
- Check the rest of the family for boils.

How are boils spread?

Boils are spread by fluid, blood or pus from a boil touching other skin.

What to do if the boil gets worse

A large, deep boil is called an abscess (you say, ab-ses).

Go to the doctor immediately if the boil is near the eye

Go to the doctor if any of these things happen:

- ▶ the boil is bigger than a 10 cent coin
- ▶ the boil lasts longer than a week
- ▶ the boil is very painful
- ▶ red streaks start to appear on the skin around the boil
- ▶ there are a lot of boils or your child has boils regularly
- ▶ if your child seems unwell or has a fever

A doctor might:

- ▶ Drain the pus from a boil
- ▶ Give your child antibiotic tablets or a cream to put on the boil



It is important to take the antibiotics each day until they are finished, even if the boil has got better. The antibiotics need to keep killing the infection in the body after the skin has healed.

Time off from kura or school

If your child is feeling well they can go to kura or school but keep boils covered with plasters or dressings.

Notes:

Cellulitis

(you say, sell-you-ly-tis)

Any area of skin can become infected with cellulitis if the skin is broken, for example from a sore, insect bite, boil, rash, cut, burn or graze. Cellulitis can also infect the flesh under the skin if it is damaged or bruised or if there is poor circulation.

Signs your child has cellulitis:

- The skin will look red, and feel warm and painful to touch.
- There may be pus or fluid leaking from the skin.
- The skin may start swelling.
- The red area keeps growing. Gently mark the edge of the infected red area with a pen to see if the red area grows bigger.
- Red lines may appear in the skin spreading out from the centre of the infection.



What to do

- **Cellulitis is a serious infection that needs to be treated with antibiotics.**
- **Go to the doctor if the infected area is painful or bigger than a 10 cent piece.**
- **Go to the doctor immediately if cellulitis is near an eye as this can be very serious.**
- Make sure your child takes the antibiotics every day until they are finished, even if the infection seems to have cleared up. The antibiotics need to keep killing the infection in the body after the skin has healed.
- Check and clean the infected skin every day.
- Wash the infected skin with warm water or in a salt bath. A teaspoon of salt, antiseptic or bleach could be added to a bath to help kill the bacteria.
- Cover with a clean cloth or plaster if fluid or pus is coming out of the infection.
- Keep the infected area raised, for example if the cellulitis is in your child's leg, they should lie down and put a pillow under their leg.
- Give your child paracetamol if they are in pain.

- Wash your hands before and after touching the infected area.
- Keep your child's nails short and clean.
- Don't let your child share bath water, towels, sheets and clothes.
- Make sure your child rests and eats plenty of fruit and vegetables and drinks plenty of water.

Go back to the doctor if the red area gets bigger or deeper or your child has a fever. Cellulitis can spread to other parts of the body or blood. Your child may need blood tests or more antibiotics.



If the doctor gives your child antibiotics, make sure your child takes them every day until they are finished, even if the infection seems to have cleared up earlier. The antibiotics need to keep killing the infection in the body after the skin has healed.

How is cellulitis spread?

Bad bacteria (germs) gets into broken skin such as a cut or insect bite.

Notes:

Time off from kura or school

At least one day after treatment (such as antibiotics) has started, or check with your doctor or public health nurse.

Chicken pox



Children should be immunised to stop them getting chicken pox. Talk to your doctor or public health nurse about immunisation.

A child may have a fever and a headache. Spots will appear with a blister on top of each spot. Blisters pop and get a scab or crust. The blisters are usually on the stomach, back and face, and then spread to other parts of the body. Blisters can also be inside the mouth and on the head.

What to do

- Make sure your child drinks lots of fluid. Water is best.
- Try and stop your child from scratching their skin. You could use calamine lotion or a cool bath to help the chicken pox become less itchy.
- Keep your child's nails short and clean.
- Check other children for chicken pox.

How is chicken pox spread?

Coughing and sneezing.
Contact with fluid from blisters.

What to do if the chicken pox gets worse

Go to the doctor if any of these things happen:

- ▶ spots get redder, warm or painful
- ▶ your child gets a fever, cough, diarrhoea (you say, dy-a-ree-a) or starts vomiting. These things can cause dehydration (where your child is getting rid of more fluid than they have from drinking water).

Your child may need blood tests and antibiotics.



It is important for your child to take the antibiotics every day until they are finished, even if the chicken pox seems to have cleared up. The antibiotics need to keep killing the infection in the body after the skin has healed.

Time off from kura or school

One week after the rash starts, or check with your doctor or public health nurse.

Notes:

Cuts, scratches and grazes



What to do

- Clean and check the area every day.
- Wash with warm water.
- Cover with a plaster or bandage – try to use things that won't stick to the cut, scratch or graze.
- Go to the doctor if it is a deep cut or it won't stop bleeding. Your child may need stitches.

**How do cuts,
scratches and
grazes get
infected?**

Bad bacteria (germs) gets
into the wound.

What to do if the cut, scratch or graze gets worse

Go to the doctor if any of these things happen:

- the area around the cut, scratch or graze gets red, swollen or painful
- there is pus
- red lines on the skin spread out from the infected area
- your child feels unwell or has a fever

Your child may have a serious skin infection such as cellulitis. Your child may need blood tests and antibiotics.



It is important for your child to take the antibiotics every day until they are finished, even if the infection seems to have cleared up. The antibiotics need to keep killing the infection in the body after the skin has healed.

Time off from kura or school

If infected, at least one day after treatment has started, or check with your doctor or public health nurse. Cover infected skin with a plaster or bandage.

Notes:

Eczema

(you say, ex-ma)



Eczema is also known as dermatitis (you say, der-ma-ty-tis).

Eczema is not an infection. Your child cannot give eczema to another child. Your child cannot get eczema from another child.

Eczema is patches of dry itchy skin that become red. In children eczema is common behind the knees and on arms, hands, neck and face. Sometimes children stop getting eczema when they get older.

What to do

- Keep the skin moisturised to help stop it itching and cracking.
- Moisturise if the skin is dry. This may be many times a day. Use an emollient (you say, e-mole-e-int) cream such as fatty cream or non-ionic cream. Your doctor can prescribe these creams. Use creams without perfume as perfumes can make the skin sting and itch. Make sure your hands are clean before applying eczema creams. Do not put your hands in tubs of creams as this can spread germs. Spoon out what you need and put this on a dish or paper towel.
- Keep the skin clean.
- Use soap-free cleaners (such as non-ionic cream) instead of soap.
- Keep your child's nails short and clean.
- If your child has eczema and swims in the sea or a pool, when they finish swimming wash off the salt water or chlorinated water, as the salt and chlorine can dry out their skin.

Do not do anything to dry out the skin as this will make the eczema worse.

Eczema can be controlled with treatment.

See your doctor if your child is waking at night or missing school because of their eczema.

What to do if eczema gets infected

These are pictures of infected eczema.



Go to the doctor if any of these things happen:

- areas of skin start swelling and become more painful
- pus develops
- the infected eczema is bigger than a 10 cent coin
- small red spots appear around eczema

Your child may need special cream, such as steroid cream, blood tests and antibiotics, if their eczema gets infected.



It is important for your child to take the antibiotics every day until they are finished, even if the infected eczema seems to have cleared up. The antibiotics need to keep killing the infection in the body after the skin has healed.

How do you get eczema?

The exact cause of eczema is unknown.

Eczema is not contagious.

Notes:

Time off from kura or school

If your child feels well they can go to kura or school.

Impetigo

(you say, im-pa-ty-go), also known as school sores



Blisters on exposed parts of body, such as hands, legs and face. Blisters burst and turn into a sore with a yellow crust that gets bigger each day. The sores are itchy. The sores spread easily to other parts of the skin. Impetigo is easily spread to other children and adults if they touch the sores.

What to do

- Go to the doctor.
- Check and clean every day.
- Gently wash the sores with warm water and a soft cloth. Wash the sores until the crust comes off and wash away the pus and blood.
- Check other children for impetigo. Use the cream from the doctor on the sores.
- Cover sores with a cloth or plaster to help stop the infection from spreading.
- Keep your child's nails short and clean.
- Wash your hands before and after touching the skin or sores.
- Make sure your child washes their hands often, especially if they touch the sores.

How are school sores spread?

Fluid or pus from sores gets on other skin. Keep sores clean and covered.

What to do if impetigo gets worse

You need to go back to the doctor if any of these things happen:

- sores last more than a week
- sores become red or swollen
- sores have pus in them
- your child has a fever

The infection may have spread to other parts of the body or blood. Your child may need blood tests and antibiotics.



It is important to take the antibiotics every day until they are finished, even if the impetigo seems to have cleared up earlier. The antibiotics need to keep killing the infection in the body after the skin has healed.

Notes:

Time off from kura or school

One day after treatment has started, or check with your doctor or public health nurse or school.

Insect bites

An insect bite is usually a red itchy bump.

There may be a blister in the middle.

Sometimes insect bites are painful (especially spider bites) as well as itchy.



What to do

- Check and clean every day.
- Wash the bite with cool water.
- Keep your child's nails short and clean.
- Do things to stop the itching like soaking in a cool bath, or putting calamine lotion or aloe vera on the bites.
- Treat pets for fleas.
- Put mosquito nets around beds, put insect screens on windows and close windows at night.
- Wear close-fitting cotton sleeves or pyjamas.
- Use children's insect repellent.
- Go to the doctor if the insect bite is near the eye.



What to do if it gets worse

Go to the doctor if any of these things happen:

- the bites last more than 2 weeks
- the red, swollen area keeps getting bigger or more painful
- there is pus in the bite

This could be a serious skin infection such as cellulitis.

How do you get insect bites?

Bites from insects such as mosquitos, fleas or spiders.

Time off from kura or school

If your child feels well they can go to kura or school.

Notes:

Ringworm



Flat, ring-shaped infection.

Ringworm on the scalp can cause round, painful red patches and make hair fall out.

What to do

- Check and clean skin everyday.
- See your doctor if the ringworm is on your child's scalp as this needs to be treated with medicine.
- For ringworm on other parts of the body a public health nurse, pharmacist or doctor can show you which cream to use to kill the infection.
- Go to the doctor if your child has a fever OR their skin becomes swollen, warm or is leaking fluid.
- Check other children for ringworm.
- Treat any animals or pets with ringworm.

How is ringworm spread?

Contact with infected skin, clothes, personal items or surfaces.



What to do if ringworm gets worse

Go to the doctor if any of these things happen:

- the infection lasts more than 2 weeks
- the ringworm is on the scalp
- skin becomes red and swollen
- there is some pus in the infection
- your child has a fever

Notes:

Time off from kura or school

Stop your child from doing things where their skin touches other children's skin such as wrestling and swimming, until the ringworm goes away.

Scabies

(you say, skay-bees)

Scabies is caused by a tiny insect known as a mite which digs under the skin and lays eggs. Small blisters grow on the skin above each egg and the skin gets very itchy. The redness and small blisters look like a rash on the skin.

The scabies rash may start anywhere but it is usually between fingers, on wrists, inside the elbow, around the waist, on the bottom or private parts and under armpits.



What to do

- Go to a doctor or call the school nurse or public health nurse to get an insecticide (you say, insect-a-side) cream to kill the mites. If your child is under 2 years old, they may need a different treatment so make sure you check with your doctor or nurse.
- Get enough cream to treat everyone in the household. Everyone should be treated even if they don't have a rash or itch.
- Apply cream to everyone in the family or household on the same day.
- The cream has to go all over the body, from head to toe - including the soles of feet.
- The cream must be left on overnight.
- On the same day as putting the cream on everyone you also need to wash all sheets, pillow cases, towels and clothes in hot water – or you need to put these things into a sealed plastic bag for 5 days to kill the mites. If you don't do these things, the mites will reinfect your family.
- Hang quilts and blankets outside for a day so the sun can kill any mites.
- Check other family members for scabies.

What to do if scabies gets worse

- Once you have killed the scabies mites with the cream, the sores or the rash will stop growing but it will still be itchy for up to four weeks.
- The sores and rash can become infected.
- Go to the doctor if the sores or rash get redder, warm, start swelling or have pus. This could be cellulitis.

You may also need to repeat the treatment of the whole family with the insecticide cream.

If your child's scabies has turned to cellulitis, your child may need blood tests and antibiotics.



It is important to take the antibiotics every day until they are finished, even if the scabies has cleared up earlier. The antibiotics need to keep killing the infection in the body after the skin has healed.

How is scabies spread?

Skin contact with the infected person, and sharing sheets and clothes.

Notes:

Time off from kura or school

At least one day after treatment with the insecticide cream.

Check skin infections



Wash your hands before and after touching infected skin