

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CELLULITIS AND SOFT TISSUE INFECTIONS

In the Clinic
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What Is Cellulitis?

Cellulitis is an infection of the skin and soft tissues below the skin. It occurs when bacteria enter your body through a cut or opening in the skin. You could get cellulitis from:

- A cut or injury that opens your skin, such as through an accident or surgery
 - Burns
 - Human, animal, or insect bites
 - Skin ulcers
 - Dermatitis or other skin conditions
- Certain health conditions increase your risk for cellulitis, including:
- Diabetes
 - Peripheral artery disease
 - Cirrhosis
 - HIV
 - Obesity

What Are the Warning Signs?

- Red, hot, and swollen skin in the affected area
- Pain
- Pus leaking from the wound
- Tight or glossy look to the skin
- Chills and fever
- Skin sores
- Pus or fluid that collects under the skin

How Is It Diagnosed?

The infection may affect only your skin; however, it may also affect tissues under your skin, which could cause infection to spread to your blood and lymph nodes.

- Your doctor will ask you about your symptoms. He or she will also carefully examine your skin to check for signs of infection.
- In rare cases, you may need a blood test.

How Is It Treated?

- It is important to call your doctor right away if you think your skin is infected. If the infection spreads, it can be dangerous.
- Your doctor will clean your skin where it is infected.
- Fluid from the wound may need to be drained.



- You may be given antibiotics to kill the bacteria.
- The infection usually goes away after you take antibiotics. You may need to take them for a longer period if the infection is more severe. If you are given antibiotics, be sure to finish them, even if you feel better or the infection has gone away.

How Can It Be Prevented?

- If you get a minor cut or injury that breaks your skin, be sure to clean it well with soap and water and use an antibiotic ointment, which is available at your local pharmacy.
- If you have a deep wound, a puncture, or any other serious injury, see your doctor. The injury might need to be cleaned using special instruments.
- If you have diabetes, get regular foot examinations and wear diabetic shoes.
- If you are prone to cellulitis, your doctor may prescribe an antibiotic that you will need to take for a longer time.

Questions for My Doctor

- How do I know if I have an infection?
- How did I get an infection?
- How long before the treatment starts to work?
- Are there any side effects from taking antibiotics?
- How can I prevent this from happening again?
- Are there any activities I should avoid?

For More Information



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Medline Plus

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/cellulitis.html

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/group-strep-types