

A Guide for Patients and Families

Care of Patients with Cellulitis

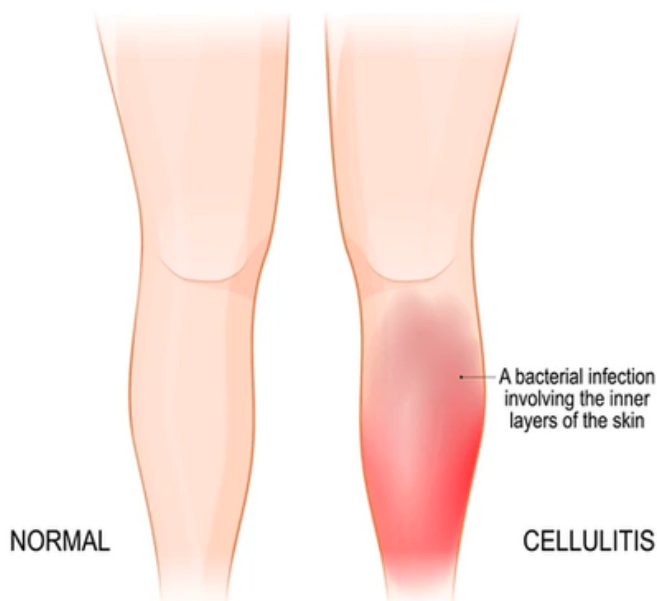
"My mum complained of terrible itch on her leg after an insect bite. She applied some ointment on it and went to bed. Her swelling became worse the next day and she was in extreme pain. We brought her to the doctor and she was diagnosed with leg cellulitis. The doctor gave her some antibiotics and her leg got better within a week."

What is Cellulitis?

Cellulitis is a skin infection. The affected area is usually swollen and painful. It can happen on any part of the body but the skin on the lower legs is most commonly affected.

Causes

Bacteria enter the skin through a crack or break in the skin such as cuts, tears or insect bites.





Risk factors:

It can occur to anyone, however it is more common among the elderly people and person with diabetes and low immune systems.

You are at a higher risk if you have:

- Trauma to the skin.
- Diabetes
- Circulatory problems, such as not enough blood flow to your arms and legs, poor drainage of your veins or lymphatic system, or varicose veins.
- Liver disease like chronic Hepatitis or Cirrhosis.
- Skin disorders such as Eczema, Psoriasis, or infectious diseases that cause sores, like Chickenpox.

Signs & symptoms:

Cellulitis usually begins as a small area of redness and pain on the skin. It spreads rapidly to surrounding tissues and causes redness, swelling, warmth and pain to the affected area.

Other signs include:

Tight, shiny and swollen skin

Fever

Tiredness

Shivering or chills

Muscle aches

Sweating



Treatment

- Your doctor will usually prescribe oral antibiotics to treat cellulitis. While taking antibiotics, monitor your condition to see if the symptoms improve.
- You should rest until your symptoms improve. While you rest, you should raise the affected limb higher than your heart to reduce any swelling.
- If your symptoms get worse, or if you develop a fever, contact your doctor immediately.
- Your doctor may advise hospitalisation if you have an infection that does not improve with oral antibiotics, or require intravenous antibiotics.



How do you care for your Cellulitis?

1. Complete the full course of antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor even if your skin infection has improved and monitor your condition.





2. Get plenty of rest.

3. Raise the affected leg on a stool when sitting or on pillows when lying down to reduce swelling.



4. Contact your doctor or nurse if you have a fever or your condition gets worse.

5. If your infection does not heal well, you may need to be admitted to hospital for an injection and antibiotics.



What can you do to prevent recurrence?



Practice good personal hygiene and keep your skin clean.

Wear sturdy, well-fitting shoes, or slippers with loose-fitting cotton socks. Do not walk barefoot outdoors.



Wash affected skin area with soap and water. Make sure it heals over the next few days.

It is important to seek medical treatment early because the infection can spread to your lymph nodes and blood stream and become life-threatening.

You may wish to proceed to your own attending hospitals, nearest Polyclinic or family doctor for medical attention and advice.