

# Cellulitis (skin infection)

## What is cellulitis?

It is an infection that can occur in the skin and underlying soft tissue. It is usually related to a break in the skin (scrape/cut) but can occur without an obvious cause. It is caused from bacteria and requires medication to treat it. It can cause the skin and tissue to become red, swollen, painful and warm to touch. It does not usually spread from person to person.



## How is cellulitis treated?

Antibiotics are used to treat cellulitis. Antibiotics can be prescribed by intravenous (IV) or oral routes. It is necessary to always finish the whole prescription of antibiotics the doctor ordered even if the cellulitis has cleared up and you are feeling better.

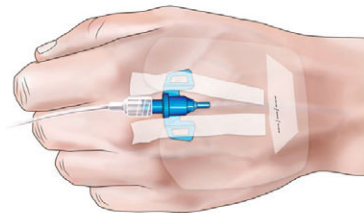
### □ Intravenous antibiotics (IV)

- The IV antibiotic will be given to you at your home by Home and Community Care (CCAC) which should be in touch with you on your listed telephone number.

OR

- You will need to return to the emergency department for your IV antibiotics at \_\_\_\_\_(date/time)

You will be sent home with an IV in place. This is not a needle rather a small hollow plastic tube that remain in place to be used for the next dose(s) of your antibiotics. If the IV should accidentally fall out, don't panic, apply pressure with a gauze or cloth to stop bleeding and return to the emergency department for a new IV insertion.



These instructions are not intended to be all-inclusive, may not cover all possibilities and are not a substitute for professional medical care. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your doctor, Telehealth Ontario (866)797-0000, or return to the emergency department.

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Oral antibiotics

- Your prescription can be filled at any drug store
- Remember to finish all of the prescribed medication

You will need to have your family doctor or return to the emergency department to have the infection reassessed on \_\_\_\_\_ (date); regardless of where or how you received your antibiotics.

## What can I expect with Cellulitis?

The red or swollen area may get slightly bigger during the first 24-48 hours while you are on your antibiotics, but after that it should stop spreading and begin to shrink. You should try to keep the infected area elevated and try to reduce activity to the limb/area if possible. You should not use any creams on the area unless prescribed by the doctor.

If you are in pain you can take medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®). Your doctor may give you a prescription if you are requiring stronger pain control.

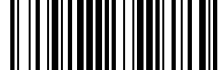
## Call your family doctor or return to emergency department if:

- The red or swollen area is rapidly spreading
- The pain in the red or swollen area is worsening
- You develop a fever (temperature  $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) or are feeling generally sick or unwell
- You develop a rash separate from the infection, especially if it is itchy
- You have difficulty breathing, speaking or swallowing (call 911)



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