

Skin and Soft Tissue Infections

What are skin and soft tissue infections?

Infections of the skin and underlying tissues happen when germs enter through breaks in the skin. Boils and abscesses are examples of simple skin infections. These kinds of infections are more common in children and older adults, in people who are frail or malnourished, and in people with health problems like diabetes or HIV.

What are the symptoms?

People with simple infections have pain, swelling, redness, and heat near the infected skin. More severe infections can cause a fever, vomiting, weakness, or drowsiness.

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. This is a germ that is difficult to treat because it can't be controlled with many commonly used antibiotics. It causes nearly six out of 10 skin and soft tissue infections.

How are patients with these infections treated?

Simple infections can be treated with antibiotic ointments or pills. Sometimes doctors use a scalpel to cut open the wound and remove pus. Patients with serious medical conditions or very bad infections might need to be admitted to the hospital for surgery.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/community/index.html>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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