

ABSCESS

Current Anticipatory guidance Recommendations and Education (CARE)

What is an Abscess?

- An abscess is a **collection or pocket** of pus under the skin caused by a bacterial infection
- Abscesses are often confused with spider bites, but they are **not actually caused by spiders**
- Bacteria normally lives on the skin and is typically harmless
- Infections form after a small cut, scratch or bump causes an opening in the skin that allows the bacteria in. Sometimes you won't notice anything before the abscess forms other times there is pain and redness
- They are often painful and may have redness of the skin surrounding it
- Some abscesses have a “head” on them or a small opening or crusting on top
- Sometimes pus may drain from small openings. **Do not make your own openings** with needles or knives if the abscess is not draining.
- Sometimes an abscess may be called a boil

What should I expect?

- Some abscesses are very small and need only antibiotics
- Larger abscesses **may need to be drained with either a needle or a scalpel by a doctor**, this may also be called lancing or I and D.
- **Draining is good** to help get rid of the infection
- If an abscess is drained, it may not need antibiotics as drainage may be enough to fix the problem.
- Sometimes abscess are packed or have drains placed to allow continued drainage of the pus
- Some children **may get these infections more than once**
- MRSA is one type of bacteria that may cause an abscess but there are many other bacteria that may lead to abscesses as well
- Some children get a fever
- There are many differ types of bacteria that cause abscess and not all antibiotics treat every bacteria
- Sometimes a different antibiotic needs to be given or you may have to come back for IV antibiotics

What can I do for my child?

- **Warm compresses and warm baths** can help to keep the abscess draining
- Make sure the water is not so hot that it can burn the skin
- Keep compresses on for about 30 minutes about 3 times per day
- If your child is prescribed antibiotics, make sure they take them until they are finished. Do not stop giving them antibiotics even if the wound looks better.
- Keep the wound covered with a light bandaid. Do not put on anything that will prevent draining
- Change the bandage whenever there is drainage
- If your child has a fever or pain you treat it with Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen (Ibuprofen is only for children over 6 months old)

- If the abscess is draining gentle pressure is ok but **do not squeeze too hard**, especially if it is not draining
- Good hand washing is important as is cleaning sheets and clothes. Certain types of bacteria may spread between family members

How long with my child be sick for?

- The abscess and redness on the skin should start to improve after about 1 to 2 days of antibiotics
- The infection should go away after about 3 to 5 days depending on how large the abscess is

When should I get immediate attention?

- All kids should **follow up with their regular doctors** a few days after being in the ER
- If your child does not start to have improvement after about 1 to 2 days or appears to get worse at any time
- If your child starts to develop more redness around the abscess or a streak of redness moving away from the abscess
- If your child appears ill or has pain that is not improved with simple interventions

*Did you know?

TYLENOL = ACETAMINOPHEN
MOTRIN, ADVIL = IBUPROFEN

Many medications have more than one name because of generic and brand name types. Generic and brand types work the same. Ibuprofen/Motrin may only be given to children over 6 months