

# LYMPHEDEMA THERAPY SOURCE

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## CELLULITIS

### Definition

Cellulitis is a bacterial skin infection usually caused by the strep or staph bacteria<sup>1</sup> which are commonly found on the skin or in the environment. An infection most frequently occurs when there is a break in the skin from trauma (cat scratch, thorn bush puncture, stepping on an item, etc.) or other conditions impacting the skin (dry skin, Athlete's foot, obesity, etc.). But an infection can also occur when the skin is swollen – most likely, causing it to be more permeable to bacteria & providing a friendly (congested) environment to flourish.

### Symptoms

Use the following acronym to recognize an infection:

- S – swelling (more than usual)
- H – heat (or warmth) around the area
- A – aches (or pain) around the area
- R – redness
- P – pus (or blisters)

You may not experience all of these symptoms. But it is important you immediately contact your doctor or visit urgent care if you suspect an cellulitis. Each infection damages your lymphatic system by causing scarring. Repeated infections can even cause lymphedema. But most importantly, postponing intervention can lead to sepsis & potentially be life-threatening.

### Treatment<sup>2</sup>

Cellulitis requires an oral antibiotic. You should notice an improvement in symptoms within 2-3 days of starting an antibiotic. If you don't, you need to contact your doctor as you may need a different prescription.

### Prevention<sup>3,4</sup>

Wash your hands & keep them clean. Use a slightly more acidic soap & lotion approved by your therapist or doctor. Wash any wound or area of skin trauma immediately with soap & water. Keep your skin hydrated but dry (prevent skin maceration between skin folds or between toes, for example) Promptly treat any skin infection (like Athlete's foot, skin yeast infection, psoriasis, etc.) Protect your skin by using gloves or protective gear when there's a risk of injury (such as gardening). Don't walk barefoot.

### References

<sup>1</sup> (bacteria) [https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/cellulitis#:~:text=Cellulitis%20is%20a%20deep%20infection,Streptococcus%20pneumoniae%20\(Strep](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/cellulitis#:~:text=Cellulitis%20is%20a%20deep%20infection,Streptococcus%20pneumoniae%20(Strep)

<sup>2</sup> (antibiotics) <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/news/publications/health-matters/antibiotic-dos-and-donts-tips-for-staying-healthy-while-taking-an-antibiotic#:~:text=It%20varies%2C%20but%20symptoms%20can,also%20take%20a%20bit%20longer.>

<sup>3</sup> (prevention) <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cellulitis/symptoms-causes/syc-20370762>

<sup>4</sup> (prevention, pH) Foldi's Textbook of Lymphology