Skin Infections

A skin infection usually develop as a result of disruption of the skin barrier.

CAUSES

A skin infection might occur following:

- Trauma or an injury to the skin such as a cut or insect sting.
- Inflammation (eczema).
- Breaks in the skin between the toes (athlete's foot).
- Edema (swelling).

SYMPTOMS

The legs are the most common site affected. Usually there is:

- Redness.
- Swelling.
- Pain.
- Sometimes red streaks in the area of the infection.

TREATMENT

Minor skin infections may be treated with topical antibiotics, but if the skin infection is severe, hospital care and intravenous (IV) antibiotic treatment may be needed.

Most often skin infections can be treated with oral antibiotic medicine as well as proper rest and elevation of the affected area until the infection improves. If you are prescribed oral antibiotics, it is important to take them as directed and to take all the pills regardless of improvement in your symptoms before you have taken all of the medicine. You may apply warm compresses to the area for 20-30 minutes 4 times daily.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The pain and swelling from your infection do not improve within 2 days.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop a fever, chills, or other serious problems.

YOU MIGHT NEED A TETANUS SHOT NOW IF:

- You have no idea when you had the last one.
- You have never had a tetanus shot before.
- Your wound had dirt in it.
- If you need a tetanus shot, and you choose not to get one, there is a rare chance of getting tetanus. Sickness from tetanus can be serious.

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