

How can I prevent cellulitis?

Cellulitis may not always be preventable, but you can reduce your risk by:

- If you have Athlete's foot treat it quickly
- Clean any cuts or wounds that you may have
- Don't let your skin become too dry as dry skin can crack easily and bacteria can enter through the skin cracks. This is important if you are prone to cracked heels
- Use a simple moisturiser (in accordance with manufacturer's guidance)
- Avoid scratching your skin. Fingernails can cause breaks in the skin when you are scratching and these breaks can be an entry point for bacteria.

Who can I contact for help?

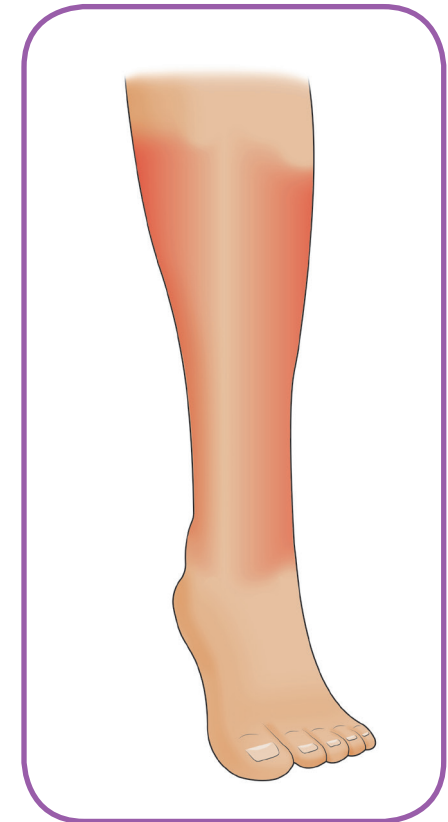
Contact your health care professional for further advice.

This may be your GP, Practice Nurse or District Nurse.

Contact NHS 24 on 111

- You should see your GP if the infection continues to spread or you become worse after you start taking the antibiotics. Don't delay seeking further advice
- A course of antibiotic tablets will normally clear cellulitis
- Some bacteria are resistant to some antibiotics and may not work
- Severe cellulitis may need antibiotics through a drip and treatment in hospital
- If you have two or more episodes of cellulitis in a year, your doctor may prescribe long-term antibiotics to prevent further episodes.

Lower Limb Cellulitis



What is cellulitis?

Cellulitis is an infection of the skin and the tissues just below the surface of the skin. Any area of the skin can be affected but the leg is the most common site.

What causes cellulitis?

- The skin is a good barrier against infection. A break in the skin from a cut, skin ulcer, athlete's foot, scratch, etc, is a way in which bacteria (germs) can get into and under the skin. A tiny cut is all that is needed to allow bacteria in
- Poor circulation of legs and feet.

Who gets cellulitis?

Cellulitis is a common problem and can affect anyone. There are some things that make you prone to cellulitis.

If you have:

- Athlete's Foot (mild fungal infection)
- Skin scratches/cuts
- Swollen legs, or are overweight or obese

- Had a previous episode of cellulitis
- Have a poor immune system - for example if you take steroids or are having chemotherapy
- Poorly controlled diabetes
- Intravenous drug use
- Had an insect bite
- Skin problems - for example eczema
- Poor circulation
- Cracked heels.

What to look out for

- The skin may feel warmer than normal or may look swollen and red and inflamed
- The infected area may spread and is usually tender
- Blisters may appear on the skin
- Glands in the body may swell and become tender because they are fighting off the infection
- You may feel unwell and have a fever. You can often feel feverish and shivery for up to 24 hours before any skin changes appear.

I have cellulitis - what can I do to help?

- Elevation. Raise the affected limb to help to prevent excess swelling. Ideally the ankle should be higher than the hip for the elevation to be helpful
- Lie on a sofa or on a bed with your lower leg elevated on pillows
- Go for short walks and wiggle your toes regularly when your foot is raised
- Painkillers may help (take advice from your pharmacist if required)
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration
- If you have Athlete's foot, treat it
- If the skin is not broken, use a simple moisturiser on the affected skin until it heals to prevent the skin drying out
- If the skin is broken, use a moisturiser on the surrounding skin
- Continue to moisturise the skin when healed
- If you have a cut or a dirty wound, have a Tetanus booster if required.