

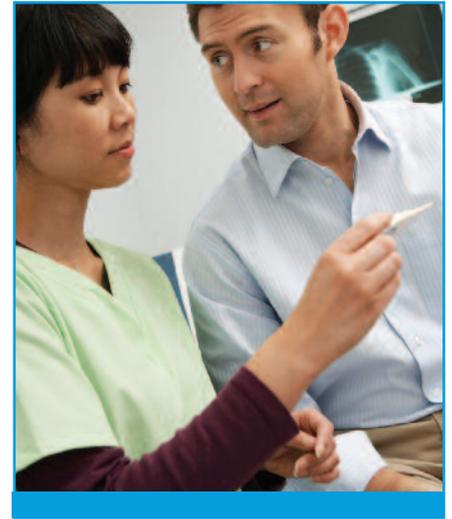
# Cellulitis and Soft Tissue Infections



## What Are Cellulitis and Soft Tissue Infections?

Cellulitis is an infection of the skin and soft tissue below the skin. It usually appears on the lower legs, but can show up anywhere on your body. You can get cellulitis when bacteria enter the body through a cut or opening in the skin. Certain health conditions raise the risk for cellulitis. These include:

- Diabetes
- Poor blood flow
- Past surgery
- Radiation treatment of the arms or legs
- Chronic athlete's foot
- Liver disease



## What Are the Warning Signs?

- Red, hot, and swollen skin in the affected area
- Pain
- Leaking of fluid
- Tight or glossy look to the skin
- Chills and fever
- Skin sores
- Pus or fluid that collects under the skin



## How Is it Diagnosed?

The infection may affect only your skin. It may also affect tissues under your skin. This could cause infection to spread to your blood and lymph nodes.

- Your doctor will ask you about your symptoms. He or she will also give an exam to check for signs of infection.
- You may have a blood test. Fluid from the area may be tested to help your doctor learn more.



## How Is it Treated?

It is important to call your doctor right away if you think your skin is infected. If the infection spreads, it can become very dangerous.

- Your doctor will clean your skin where it is infected.
- You may be given antibiotics to kill the bacteria.
- In some cases, surgery is needed to clean the cut or drain pus from the area.

The infection usually goes away after you take antibiotics. You may need to take them for a long period of time if the infection is severe.

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## Questions for My Doctor

- How did I get an infection?
- How long before the treatment starts to work?
- Are there any side effects from taking antibiotics?
- How can I prevent this from happening again?
- Are there any activities I should avoid?



## Bottom Line

- Cellulitis is an infection of the skin. Soft tissue infections happen to the body tissues right under the skin.
- Signs of infection include red, hot, and swollen skin; chills; and fever.
- Your doctor will give a physical exam and check your skin for infection. Blood tests may also be needed to check for infection.
- Antibiotic medicines are used to treat the infection. In some cases, surgery is needed to clean the wound or drain the infected area.
- It is important to get medical attention right away because cellulitis infections can become dangerous quickly.

## For More Information

- **Medline Plus:**  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/cellulitis.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/cellulitis.html)
- **American Academy of Family Physicians:**  
<http://www.aafp.org/afp/2015/0915/p474-s1.htm>

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