

Facial Surgery Center Information Packet

Cellulitis

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What is cellulitis?

Cellulitis (also called a soft tissue infection) is an infection of the skin. Skin anywhere on the body may become infected. Cellulitis happens most often on the arms or lower legs. You can also get it in your face and around your eyes. It does not spread from person to person, but you can get cellulitis more than once. With medicine, cellulitis should be gone in seven to 10 days. Without treatment, the infection can get into your blood and cause a blood infection.

What causes it?

Cellulitis is caused by a germ called bacteria. The bacteria can get into the skin through a small cut or sore. You also can get cellulitis from animal bites, swimming in either fresh water or salt water, from burns or after surgery. Injury to an eye or a sinus infection can cause cellulitis of the skin around the eye.

Signs and symptoms

General cellulitis: The infected skin usually feels tender, and looks red and swollen. You may also have a fever, chills and sweats. Lymph nodes near the infected skin may be swollen. These may be felt as hard bumps under the skin.

Cellulitis near an eye: The eyelid will be swollen, red and feel tender. You may have a runny nose or a headache.

Cellulitis of the face: Adults who have cellulitis in their face may not want to eat and may vomit. They may feel very tired. The skin may itch or burn. The front of the neck may be swollen. Children with facial cellulitis may be irritable and also look like they have a cold.

Cellulitis around the anus: The anus is the opening where you have a bowel movement (BM). The infected skin may be red, swollen and itchy. It may hurt to have a BM.

Care

You need to take antibiotic medicine to kill the bacteria. Raise the infected arm/leg above the level of the heart to help lessen swelling and pain. Your caregiver may have you put warm or cool wet dressings on the area to help lessen pain. Although severe cellulites may need to be treated in the hospital, mild infections can be treated outside of the hospital.

