

Skin infection (cellulitis)

***Information for
patients and carers***

**Accident and Emergency
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary**

What is cellulitis?

Cellulitis is an infection of the skin and underlying tissue. Everyone's skin has bacteria on it, but when the skin barrier is broken, you may develop an infection.

However, in some cases there is no obvious injury found.

What are the symptoms?

- It looks red and swollen, and is hot to touch.
- It can vary in size and may start to spread.
- It can cause enlarged glands (for example if your cellulitis is on your leg you may feel enlarged glands in your groin.
- If it is on a joint, it can be painful to move it.
- You may feel hot and have flu like symptoms.

How is it treated?

Antibiotics

A course of antibiotic tablets usually clears up cellulitis. There is normally a good improvement after the first 48 hours of treatment. If your infection is severe, you might need to get the antibiotics as injections into a vein.

Elevation

Keeping the affected part raised helps reduce swelling and can also help with the pain.

Pain relief

It's important to take painkillers regularly to reduce the pain and help you keep mobile.

Paracetamol and ibuprofen are effective painkillers if taken regularly. As you can buy these over the counter at the chemist or in many shops we don't routinely give you them. Do read the instructions on the packets carefully for the dosage.

Please also check if there are reasons why you might not be able to take these medications. Your family doctor or pharmacist can advise you.

Fluids

Keep well hydrated (drink 2 to 3 litres of fluid each day).

Your treatment plan:

If you have any of the following please seek urgent medical advice from your GP or local Accident and Emergency department:

- No improvement by 48 hours despite taking your antibiotics as prescribed.
- Rapidly spreading redness (tracking redness from infection).
- Increased pain.
- You become unwell with fever, headache or sickness.

**This leaflet is also available in large print.
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Ask for leaflet 1594.**

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet.
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