

Patient Information – Cellulitis

What is cellulitis?

Cellulitis is a common skin infection, which usually affects the legs but can occur in the arms, face or other parts of the body. Cellulitis most commonly develops following a break in the skin such as a cut, abrasion or insect bite.

Cellulitis is more likely to develop in people who are prone to infection, such as people with diabetes, but can also occur in people who do not have any other health problems.

Cellulitis in the legs sometimes develops in association with a fungal infection in the feet and toes called tinea or 'athlete's foot'.

Treatment

You are being treated by Hospital in the Home as an alternative to admission to hospital. You will be reviewed each day by a nurse who will check on your progress and administer treatment. It is important that you cooperate with all aspects of your treatment the same as if you were a patient in hospital.

Treatment includes:

Rest

You should restrict your activity (e.g., generally stay around the home), not engage in strenuous activity, take frequent rest periods and get plenty of sleep.

Elevation

You should elevate the affected limb when you are not active. This reduces pain and swelling. Keep your leg up by supporting it on a well-padded footstool or chair (use a pillow or cushions). If the arm is affected you may have been given a sling to use when resting.

Fluids and Diet

Drink plenty of fluid (at least 2 litres a day) and eat a healthy diet. Minimise alcohol intake.

Antibiotics

You will be receiving antibiotics either by mouth or through an intravenous cannula. If you are receiving intravenous antibiotics the nurse will administer these when they review you each day. When intravenous antibiotics are no longer needed (usually after 5 to 7 days of treatment) you may start a course of oral antibiotics.

Progress

Your progress will be closely monitored by the nurse and doctor. Treatment usually takes 10 to 14 days but varies from patient to patient. When your condition has improved, your care will be handed over to your GP for ongoing management.

Unexpected problems

If you feel your condition is getting worse at any time contact the nurse immediately. Things which might indicate that your condition is getting worse include:

- High fevers
- Shivering or uncontrollable shaking
- Vomiting
- Dizziness, fainting spells or collapse
- Severe or increasing pain

Contact us

To contact the Hospital in the Home service, please call 1300 443 989 and follow the prompts to select the link to the service you need to speak to.