

Cellulitis is a common, potentially serious bacterial skin infection. The affected skin appears swollen and red and is typically painful and warm to the touch. Cellulitis usually affects the skin on the lower legs, but it can occur in the face, arms and other areas. It occurs when a crack or break in your skin allows bacteria to enter. Left untreated, the infection can spread to your lymph nodes and bloodstream and rapidly become life-threatening. It isn't usually spread from person to person.

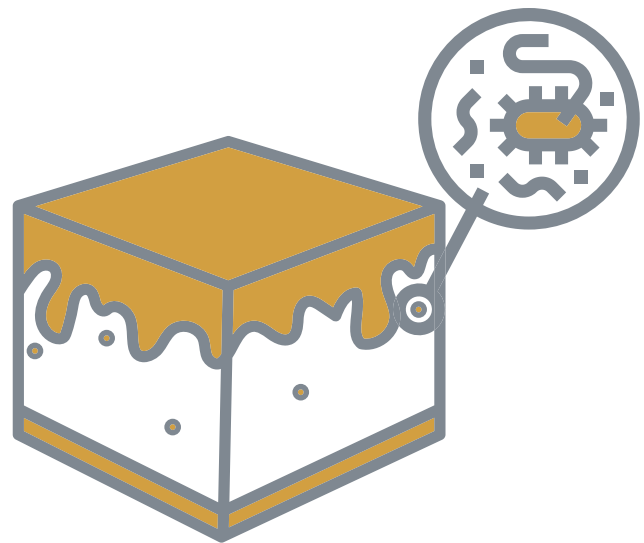
Causes

Cellulitis occurs when bacteria, most commonly streptococcus and staphylococcus, enter through a crack or break in your skin. Bacteria are most likely to enter disrupted areas of skin, such as where you've had recent surgery, cuts, puncture wounds, an ulcer, athlete's foot or dermatitis. Animal bites can cause cellulitis. Bacteria can also enter through areas of dry, flaky skin or swollen skin.

Symptoms

Possible signs and symptoms of cellulitis, which usually occur on one side of the body, include:

- Red area of skin that tends to expand
- Swelling
- Tenderness
- Pain
- Warmth
- Fever
- Red Spots
- Blisters
- Skin Dimpling



Risk Factors

Several factors put you at increased risk of cellulitis:

- **Injury.** Any cut, fracture, burn or scrape gives bacteria an entry point.
- **Weakened immune system.** Conditions that weaken your immune leave you more susceptible to infections. Certain medications also can weaken your immune system.
- **Skin conditions.** Conditions such as eczema, athlete's foot and shingles can cause breaks in the skin, which give bacteria an entry point.
- **Chronic swelling of your arms or legs (lymphedema).** This condition sometimes follows surgery.
- **History of cellulitis.** Having had cellulitis before makes you prone to develop it again.
- **Obesity.** Being overweight or obese increases your risk of developing cellulitis.