

Patient information

What is cellulitis?

Cellulitis is an infection caused by bacteria getting into the deeper layers of the skin. It can occur to any area of the body but predominantly it affects the lower leg or foot.

What causes cellulitis?

Bacteria enters the deeper layers of the skin by means of a cut, insect bite, or cracked broken skin.

You are more prone to suffer with cellulitis if you have these existing problems:

- poor circulation
- diabetes
- weakened immune system
- poor mobility.

People with a condition called lymphoedema are also more prone to cellulitis due to the excessive fluid build-up.

You are more prone to cellulitis if you have suffered with it before.

Signs and symptoms of cellulitis

- painful, hot, red and swollen area to the skin
- blistering of the skin
- swollen or painful glands.

Treatment for cellulitis

Cellulitis is usually treated with broad complex antibiotics such as Flucloxacillin and symptoms will start to improve within a few days.

Your symptoms may get mildly worse for the first 48 hours before they start to improve but this is completely normal.

It's important that you complete the course of antibiotics even if your symptoms start to improve.

Most people recover fully from cellulitis within 7 – 10 days.

If, however, you develop any of the following symptoms you should seek **URGENT** medical attention:

- a very high temperature, or you feel hot and shivery
- a rapid heart rate or rapid breathing
- purple patches on your skin
- feeling faint or dizzy
- confusion or disorientation
- cold, clammy or pale skin
- unresponsiveness / loss of consciousness.

These symptoms are suggestive that the infection may have spread into your blood.

How can you help with your recovery from cellulitis?

- take paracetamol or ibuprofen for pain
- raise the affected part of the body on a pillow or stool when you are sitting down to help reduce the swelling
- regularly move the joint near the infection to help prevent joint stiffness
- drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration
- do not wear compression or lymphoedema hosiery during an acute phase of cellulitis – ensure symptoms are improving first.

Clinical research

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

Accessibility

If you require this leaflet in a different format, please contact the patient advice and liaison service on 01284 712555 or email PALS@wsh.nhs.uk

If you would like any information regarding access to our Trust services and facilities, please visit the website for Accessible: <https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



© West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust