

# Cellulitis Self-Management Plan

- Wash your hands and keep your skin clean.
- Inspect your skin daily, particularly your feet, to spot any skin problems early.
- Moisturize your skin regularly, particularly after bathing.
- Protect your hands, feet, and legs.
- If you smoke, consider quitting.
- If your medical provider orders a medication to treat cellulitis, take exactly as prescribed.

## Green Flags—All Clear

## What this means ...



If you:

- Have a habit of washing your hands regularly
- Have no open wounds, rashes, or skin breakdown
- Moisturize your skin to avoid cracking and peeling

- Good work!

Keep up the great work!

## Yellow Flags—Caution

## What this means ...



If you have:

- A history of skin problems, including cellulitis
- Red, painful, and warm areas on your skin
- Red, cracked, or flaky skin
- Fever of 100.4 or higher, chills and/or fatigue
- No improvement in symptoms, or symptoms are worse if taking oral medication or topical treatment

- You are at risk of infection.
- You may already have an infection or cellulitis

Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or health care provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

## Red Flags—Stop and Think

## What this means ...



If you have:

- Red, swollen, tender skin that is warm to the touch, AND a fever of 100.4 or higher
- A fever of 104 or higher

- You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.

If possible, notify your health care provider's office.

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: **CALL 9-1-1**

If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 9-1-1. Emergency!

# Cellulitis Fast Facts

- Cellulitis is a spreading bacterial infection of the skin and tissues beneath the skin. Different types of bacteria are usually the cause of the infection.
- Cellulitis is not contagious and is usually treated with oral or IV antibiotics.
- It can occur anywhere on the body (e.g., arm, head, neck, and other areas) but the lower leg is the most common site.
- Possible signs and symptoms include redness, swelling, tenderness, pain, warmth, and fever.
- Health problems that weaken your immune system place you at a higher risk for developing cellulitis. These include diabetes, chronic leukemia, chronic kidney disease, liver disease, and circulation disorders.
- An injury to the skin, a cut or scrape, as well as a burn or a broken bone places you at higher risk. If you have chronic lower leg swelling (edema); Athlete's foot fungus; bites from insects, animals, or other humans; scratching or itching; are overweight or have poor blood flow in your legs, you are also at risk.
- IV drug users have a higher risk of developing cellulitis.
- Left untreated, complications can occur, including blood infection, bone infection, inflammation of your lymph vessels, and tissue death (gangrene).

## What can you do?

- Take care of your skin. Keep it clean, and use a non-drying lotion to prevent drying and cracking.
- If you are diabetic or have poor blood flow, take extra steps to prevent skin wounds and treat any cuts or cracks in the skin right away. Wash wounds gently with soap and water or as directed by your health care provider.
- Apply ointments or treatment only as directed by your health care provider.
- When you meet with your health care provider, be prepared to tell your symptoms, and report any recent surgeries, injuries, animal bites, or insect bites.
- Tell your health care provider about all the medications you take. If your health care provider orders an antibiotic, it is important to take the full course of antibiotics as prescribed. Don't stop taking it just because you start to feel better.

## Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County—plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County. For information about services, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail [info@communitylivingconnections.org](mailto:info@communitylivingconnections.org).



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