

RECURRENT BOILS

What causes boils?

Boils (furuncles) are painful swellings of the skin caused by a deep infection with staphylococcus bacteria. The bacteria enter the skin from the outside, usually through a hair opening. The source of the “staph” bacteria is not always known. However, many people carry staph bacteria in their nostrils without having any symptoms. Sometimes, these may be transferred to the skin, causing a skin infection. Other people in the family may have staph in their nostrils or on their skin even if they do not have boils.

How are boils treated?

Your doctor will mark the appropriate items, depending on the severity of your problem. Take the medication(s) prescribed:

In addition to the antibiotic treatment, the doctor may incise (cut) and drain tense lesions since antibiotics alone often will not heal these types of boils. Do not get pus on your hands. It is best to wear disposable gloves when changing the wound dressings to prevent this. Wash hands thoroughly after changing dressings if gloves are not used. Dispose of wound dressings immediately.

Do not share towels, wash clothes, sheets, and clothing. Launder in boiling water and change daily. Gentle heat (a heating pad, hot water bottle, or a lamp held close to the skin) for 20 minutes 3-4 times per day may speed healing.

Do not use handkerchiefs now or in the future. Use paper tissues instead. This is because staph bacteria are frequently found in the nostrils in people with boils, even when the skin is clear. Tissues should immediately be thrown away.

Shower and shampoo daily with Hibiclens (can be purchased in a drug store without a prescription) instead of your regular soap and shampoo. Start now and continue for the period indicated:

If boils tense with pus, please return to the doctor so that these may be drained. If previously drained boils are not improving, you should also return to the doctor.

If the buttocks are involved with frequent episodes, the following may help prevent recurrences:

- Wear loose fitting clothing
- Wear loose-fitting trousers
- Apply Xerac-AC to totally dry buttock skin at bedtime. (Use cool air from a blow dryer or fan if necessary to completely dry the skin. The medication needs to have skin contact for 6-8 hours when you are not sweating in order to work. While you are sleeping is the best time for this. In the morning, wash off.)
- Apply Zeasorb powder during the daytime

If the face is involved:

- Soak beard with hot water for 5 minutes prior to shaving
- Discard blades daily
- As an aftershave, use alcohol
- Leave razor in alcohol between shaves or boil for 5-10 minutes prior to shaving

- Soak electric razor heads in alcohol for 1-2 hours between shaves

Should family members receive any treatment?

Yes. The skin and nasal secretions of family members may sometimes be a source of re-infection even when these people have no visible evidence of infection. This is the reason for the following recommendations.

Family members living with you and others with close contact:

- -Shower with Hibiclens for at least five days (during the same week that you do so).
- -Instill Bactroban ointment (prescription required) with cotton-tipped applicator into the front part of the nose once per day for two weeks.