

From HealthNewsDigest.com

SKIN CARE

Childhood Skin Infections on the Rise

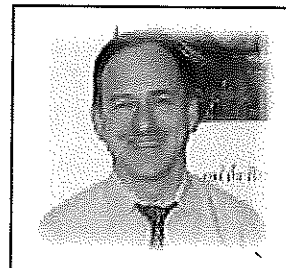
By

Nov 13, 2006, 07:00

CHILDHOOD SKIN INFECTIONS ON THE RISE

Leading dermatologist Dr. Joshua Fox on risk, prevention, awareness and treatment of kids' skin ailments

(HealthNewsDigest.com).. New York, NY, November 2006 – As they return to the routines of school, sports and activities, some parents are noticing that their children are bringing home not just their spelling tests and soccer cleats, but also a rash of skin infections. In fact, the American Academy of Dermatology notes that many childhood skin infections are on the rise, and can cause serious health issues in youngsters if they are not diagnosed and treated quickly and properly.



“While most of us are likely to provide quick and comprehensive treatment to a child who’s developed a fever or a stomach bug, there is a temptation to think of skin infections as superficial conditions that will clear up on their own in time,” explains Joshua Fox, MD, a leading NY dermatologist and founder of Advanced Dermatology. “While this is indeed sometimes the case, the vast majority of skin infections do require treatment in order to lessen the discomfort or side effects this may cause, reduce the chance of giving the infection to others, and eliminate the possibility of the infection spreading to internal organs and causing more serious health issues,” Dr. Fox adds. Many common skin infections, including ringworm, molluscum contagiosum, warts and impetigo, are on the rise – affecting 10%-15% of school-aged children each year or more. In addition, herpes – a diagnosis that often surprises many parents – is also becoming more prevalent among children today.

“Part of the reason that skin infections are becoming more common is that the environments in which these organisms thrive are the very places where children go every day,” Dr. Fox notes. Warm, damp places like locker rooms and shower stalls are prime breeding grounds for fungi, viruses and bacteria, while sharing common desks and classroom materials in school – or hairbrushes, towels, practice jerseys and equipment during sports activities – can pass infections easily between children.

Dr. Fox provides the following details on the causes, symptoms, recommended treatments and prevention strategies for five common children’s skin ailments:

Impetigo is the term for a scrape or a cut – which can be large and visible or too small even to see – that has become infected by a streptococcus or staphylococcus bacteria, causing small blisters that can burst or crust over. Staph and strep bacteria are easily transmitted from person to person, or by coming into contact with surfaces that are contaminated with them, so frequent handwashing and cleansing of common areas like sinks, desks, etc. can stem the transmission of infection. However, treatment is critical to resolve the infection once it is contracted. “Any sign of an infection in a cut or scrape, including a yellow crusting or pus oozing from the affected area, should be brought to the attention of a physician immediately and treated with topical or oral antibiotics” Dr. Fox advises. That’s because the staph bacteria that can cause impetigo is also implicated in MRSA, an antibiotic-resistant skin infection that can spread to internal organs and cause serious health problems in children.

Ringworm, also known as Tinea, is not in fact caused by a worm, but rather by a dermatophyte fungus (similar to the one that causes Athlete’s Foot). It can appear on the torso as a small, round, rough and scaly patch of skin, or on the scalp (Tinea capitis). “Children often get ringworm from handling pets that are infected or from sharing hairbrushes or

combs,” Dr. Fox notes, “So preventing this fungal infection involves washing hands before and after handling pets, and providing each family member with his or own hairbrush or comb and never sharing.” Dr. Fox also adds, “Ringworm is highly contagious, and some children and adults can be carriers of the organism – able to transmit the condition even if they don’t develop it,” Dr. Fox explains. Ringworm can be treated with over-the-counter antifungal creams, but treatment is different for scalp infection. “Any signs of ringworm should be checked out by a dermatologist, and other family members or pets in the household should be tested if a child develops the infection,” Dr. Fox adds.

Molluscum Contagiosum is a pox-virus infection that causes small, round, waxy raised bumps to appear, usually on the torso, buttocks, lower belly or thighs. “Molluscum is a virus that loves warm, wet places and is easily spread through skin-to-skin contact,” Dr. Fox advises. As a result, many children contract it at swimming pools or playing contact sports, and so Dr. Fox recommends children never share towels or equipment, and always wash thoroughly before and after swimming or other sports. Dr. Fox adds, “While molluscum growths rarely hurt or itch, young children tend to scratch or pick at anything abnormal on the skin, which can cause further infection and scarring.” What’s more, molluscum can spread uncontrollably and can take up to two years to resolve on their own. Some methods to remove the molluscum are painful, so most pediatric dermatologists recommend a topical prescription to eradicate them.

Warts are the result of a virus that has entered the skin and taken up residence in its outer layer, causing a thickening or lump in the skin, most often on the hands or feet. “Warts can become painful and unsightly, and can take a long time to resolve as well, and so many dermatologists will remove them with topical salicylic acid or, if the wart is in a sensitive area like on the face or in the mouth, with cryosurgery or excision Dr. Fox explains. Herpes is a diagnosis that shocks many parents, but the type of herpes virus that is common among children is Herpes Simplex Virus 1 (HSV-1), which most often causes cold sores around or within the mouth. “Unfortunately, there is no cure for the herpes virus, so children should take extra care in preventing it by avoiding sharing eating utensils or engaging in any mouth-to-mouth contact with other children,” Dr. Fox notes. Although HSV-1 is not curable, there are a couple of prescription creams that can shorten the duration and lessen the pain of an outbreak.

Bio: Joshua L. Fox, M.D., F.A.A.D.

Joshua L. Fox, M.D., is a leading authority in the field of dermatology with an expertise in skin cancer, cosmetic surgery, and laser procedures.
www.advancedd.com.

www.HealthNewsDigest.com

© Copyright by HealthNewsDigest.com