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# Staph Infection

What is a Staph Infection?

The skin's surface is teeming with bacteria, yeast, and fungi called commensal organisms. One of these organisms is called *Staphylococcus aureus* or Staph. For various reasons, the equilibrium between Staph and the other commensals can be upset, leading to an overgrowth of Staph.

Usually, infections with Staph involve the hair follicles, hence the name Staph folliculitis. This can be an itchy or painful collection of small red bumps and pustules appearing on the scalp, face, trunk or other locations. Scratching tends to spread the infection to other areas. Many times, this condition goes unrecognized for months or years. A two to four week prescription of antibiotic is usually effective in clearing Staph folliculitis but to ensure success, it's wise to take a few additional precautions.

What is the treatment for a staph infections?

Bacteria such as Staph do not thrive in acid conditions. Therefore, a simple remedy to clear up mild, early skin infections is to use dilute "vinegar baths" to help acidify your skin so it can heal.

Vinegar baths are prepared by pouring 1-2 cups of vinegar into a shallow bath (3-5 inches) of lukewarm water. Do not use very hot water as this can damage the skin. Do not use more vinegar than this, since too much can also irritate your damaged skin. Sit in the tub for approximately 10 minutes every day, making sure all areas of the skin are saturated. Do not rinse the vinegar off, gently dry with a clean towel and apply a moisturizer, such as Eucerin lotion.

It is important not to scratch the skin and the itching should calm down after one or two of these baths.

After a shower, a mixture of 1/2 cup white vinegar to 1 quart of water may be put in a spray bottle and sprayed onto your skin. Do not rinse off.

If your Staph bacteria is resistant to antibiotics, a tablespoon of household bleach in the bath water is also useful. You should let your physician know if the bumps do not completely clear after all the antibiotic is used because this may

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signal a condition known as MRSA, a Staph bacteria that is resistant to the usual antibiotics.

To also aid healing, it is important to discontinue the use of all soaps since they are alkaline and counteract the acidifying effects of the vinegar baths.

Instead of soap, it is acceptable to bathe in plain water or use Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser, Aquanil Cleanser, or another soap substitute such as Pureblend Cleanser. You may also be prescribed an antibiotic such as Amoxicillin for two to four weeks if the infection is chronic or more aggressive. It's important not to scratch or pick at the skin since bacteria gain a foothold when the skin's integrity is compromised. Many people start a Staph infection by using tweezers to pluck hairs on the chin, or by repeated shaving with a disposable razor without cleaning it between shaves with peroxide or alcohol.