What is a skin infection?

- A skin infection can occur when microbes, very tiny organisms such as bacteria, enter the body through a break in the skin and grow inside the skin.
- Skin infections can occur with or without and existing wound.

How are skin infections diagnosed?

- Skin infections can be diagnosed through physical exam findings.
- Only sometimes a culture will be done to determine what kind of microbe is causing the infection.

What are the symptoms of skin infections?

- The area where the skin is infected may appear red, feel warm, seem swollen, or be painful.

What is the treatment for skin infections?

- The treatment is determined by the kind of microbe that is causing the infection.
- If the infection is caused by bacteria, antibiotics may be given.
- If the infection is caused by a virus, anti-viral medications may or may not be given.
- Other important treatment includes cleaning the infected area and regular dressing changes.

How long will I have to take medicine?

- Medicine such as antibiotics or anti-viral medications will be used for the shortest time possible to treat the infection.
- The duration can vary depending on the severity of the infection but is usually between 1-2 weeks.
- It is important to take the medication for the whole time that they are ordered so that no microbes get left behind and are then able to cause another infection.
What can be done to prevent another skin infection?

- Monitor for breaks in the skin. Get out of bed and move every day. Participate in regularly scheduled hygiene activities with staff.
- Follow your doctor’s instructions on how to manage chronic conditions that can increase the likelihood for infection such as diabetes, congestive heart failure (CHF), or peripheral vascular disease (PVD).
- Proper nutrition and maintaining a healthy weight.