

Ask Dr. Elston

Skin Health Solutions

(NAPSA)—*There may be more to caring for the skin you're in than many people realize. Here, from a noted dermatologist, is an answer to a common skin care question.*

Q. I'm never surprised when my four-year-old son comes in from playing outside with cuts or scrapes. But recently, a cut on his forearm has become red, swollen and a little "blistery." I've washed the area with soap and water and applied a warm, wet washcloth to relieve the pain but it's still scabby and swollen. Should I take him to see the doctor?

—*Worried Mom*

A. Dear Worried:

You probably should. Red, swollen, blistery skin may be a sign of a skin infection, which can occur when bacteria come in contact with an open cut or scrape.

If you suspect your child has a skin infection, cleaning the area with soap and water is a good first step, but it's also very important to call your doctor. Early treatment can prevent the infection from becoming more serious. If the doctor determines that your child has a bacterial skin infection, the physician may prescribe an antibiotic. There are many available, including some that taste good and have convenient dosing options.



An inflamed cut should be seen by a doctor who can prescribe an antibiotic if necessary, health experts say.

Symptoms usually begin to go away within a few days after your child starts taking the medicine. It is important, however, to finish the entire course of the antibiotic as prescribed, even if your child is feeling better. If the child does not take all of the antibiotic, it might not cure the infection. Be sure to communicate with your doctor if symptoms do not improve, if they worsen or if new symptoms appear.

• *Dirk Elston, M.D., is an Associate in the Department of Dermatology at the Geisinger Medical Center in Pennsylvania. For more information on children's skin infections, see your doctor.*