

Difference Between Erysipelas and Cellulitis

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Key Difference - Erysipelas vs Cellulitis

Erysipelas and cellulitis are two fairly common [infections](#) of the skin and subcutaneous [tissues](#) caused by the entry of [pathogenic](#) microbes via the breaches in the superficial [epidermal](#) layers. **In erysipelas, the [lesions](#) are more localized and have clearly demarcated boundaries, unlike cellulitis where the lesions are generalized and lack proper well-defined margins.** This is the **key difference** between the two infections.

What is Erysipelas?

Erysipelas is an infection of the skin and subcutaneous tissues caused by a pathogenic *Streptococcus*. These [pathogens](#) have virulent factors capable of producing erythrotoxins that make the affected area erythematous and edematous. The associated edema gives a well-demarcated border to the lesion and this is the most important clinical feature which is helpful in differentiating erysipelas from other cutaneous infections. The patient is usually febrile and has tachycardia along with general debility. Streptococci commonly enter into the underlying tissues via the breaches in superficial epidermal structures. The chance of getting erysipelas increases when there is preexisting venous or lymphatic edema.



Figure 01: Facial Erysipelas

Swabs should be taken from the infected regions for culturing and sensitivity tests. After that, the patient should be treated with broad-spectrum [antibiotics](#).

What is Cellulitis?

This is a [bacterial infection](#) of the skin and subcutaneous tissues that is more generalized than erysipelas. Similar to erysipelas this is also associated with breaches in the superficial epidermal layers. The affected region is erythematous and edematous but is not well demarcated. The patient is febrile and has malaise and leukocytosis. Erythema along narrow lymphatics is sometimes visible and it is known as lymphangitis.



Figure 02: Cellulitis of Foot with Prominent Edema

Before beginning the treatments, swabs should be taken from the infected tissues for cultures and antibiotic sensitivity tests after which the treatment of the patient with intravenous antibiotics begins. Elevation of the infected limbs is also necessary.

What are the Similarities Between Erysipelas and Cellulitis?

- Both conditions are due to the infection of the skin and subcutaneous tissues mainly by *Streptococci*.
- Swabs are taken from the infected areas in both erysipelas and cellulitis for culture and antibiotic sensitivity tests
- Broad-spectrum antibiotics are a mainstay in the management of both these infections.
- Erythema and edema are the most prominent clinical features of cellulitis and erysipelas.

What is the Difference Between Erysipelas and Cellulitis?

Erysipelas vs Cellulitis	
Erysipelas is an infection of the skin and subcutaneous tissues caused by a pathogenic <i>Streptococcus</i> .	This is a bacterial infection of the skin and subcutaneous tissues that is more generalized than erysipelas.
Lesions	
Lesions are well demarcated.	Lesions are not well demarcated.

Summary - Erysipelas vs Cellulitis

Both erysipelas and cellulitis are infections of the skin and subcutaneous tissues. The lesions in erysipelas are more localized with well-demarcated boundaries but in cellulitis, the lesions are more widespread and lack proper margins. This is the difference between the Erysipelas and Cellulitis.

Reference:

1.'Bailey and Love's Short Practice of Surgery'. Edited by Norman S Williams, Christopher J.K Bulstrode and P.Ronan O'Connell, 26th ed., CRC Press , 2013.

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- 1.'Facial erysipelas'By CDC/Dr. Thomas F. Sellers/Emory University (Public Domain) via [Commons Wikimedia](#)
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