



Tissue Myiasis

The need to Iron your Clothes while abroad

Background

While abroad, washing your clothes and leaving them to dry in the open air can lead to significant problems for the international traveller. In many of the hotter regions of the world a fly can actually lay her eggs on damp clothing which has been laid out to dry. This usually happens when the clothes are drying in shaded areas and not so often if they are left in the direct sunlight. The unsuspecting traveller may then put on the clothes when they dry (without ironing them first) and this leads to irritating skin infection known as **Tissue Myiasis**.

Where is the disease found

The regions where this infection is most commonly found includes sub-Saharan Africa, southern Spain, Central and South America and Asia. We have seen many patients from areas like Barbados and the Inca Trail as well as others who have trekked across Africa.

What actually occurs

The heat and movement of the human body stimulates the larva which burrows through the intact skin into its new host. This penetration, which is painless, takes about one minute. The larva then causes a small irritated papule which may become slightly itchy. The patient will then frequently notice the lesion which increases in size until there is an obvious sore or abscess. Some clear fluid may be extruded and, if it is a significant sized lesion, the patient may begin to feel hot and generally unwell. The lesion, **which looks like a boil**, will continue to grow over a period of days and the larva would eventually burst from the body to continue its development into a full adult fly.

Diagnosis

During the period of time when the larva is developing under the infected individuals skin (remember there may be many lesions) they are not as painful as might be expected from a traditional boil. The diagnosis may be confirmed by carefully looking (this may require a magnifying glass) for the characteristic air spiracles, which are small black splinter like tubes. They come from the larva to the skin surface and allow it to breathe.

Treatment

Treatment consists of covering the lesions with any occlusive ointment such as Vaseline or an antibiotic/steroid cream for 24 hours. This blocks the air spicule and

encourages the larva to move towards the surface. At this stage it is easier to very gently exert pressure around the lesion to encourage the larva out. If care is not taken at this point the larva will be ruptured and this may easily lead to severe inflammation.

Antibiotics

In many cases, antibiotics have little role to play in treating tissue myiasis. However when significant secondary inflammation has occurred it may be necessary to use both antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs. This is usually following ill considered external pressure by well meaning individuals - including doctors!

Biopsy

It is very unusual that a surgical biopsy is required or that these lesions need to be excised.

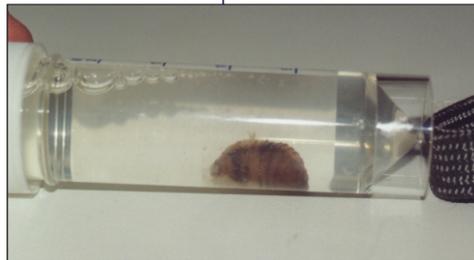


Prevention

Prevention of the disease relies on trying to dry clothes in areas where the adult flies cannot lay their eggs. If clothing has been hung out-of-doors it should always be ironed on both sides before it is worn. This is especially true of underclothing, babies nappies and socks. Any clothing may become infected. **The elasticated waists on clothing will also need special attention.** Rewashing of the clothing may not be sufficient to clear the larva.

After your trip

Any patients developing unusual boils following their travels should consider the possibility of Tissue Myiasis and attend for a detailed medical consultation to confirm the diagnosis. A swab of the lesion will generally show infection with Staphylococcal aureus. In some cases this may suggest to the medical team that a larval condition is not present. However, in cases when an individual has potentially been exposed and then develops



skin boils it should be assumed that Tissue Myiasis may be the cause.

Summary

After any possible exposure while travelling abroad make sure you iron all your clothing and if you still develop any 'sores' or 'staphylococcal abscesses' please **remember Tissue Myiasis!**

- ✓ Travel Accessories
- ✓ Tropical Diagnostic Laboratory
- ✓ Tropical Disease Screening Centre
- ✓ W.H.O. registered Yellow Fever Vaccination Centre
- ✓ International Vaccination and Malaria Advice Centres

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