

Infections

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If cleanliness is not adhered to, infection can set in. It is not a pretty sight. Bacteria, fungi, and all manner of critters feed on human flesh. Your skin protects you from most of this. But.. a simple cut, non-sterile techniques when using bandages, and even plain bad luck can mean a bit of inconvenience and trouble!

Infections

If the infection is making you feel sick, go to a clinic or emergency room! If there is a red streak going up your arm or leg or the lymph nodes swell up when you have an infected wound this is a sign of an advanced infection again get help! Some infections require intravenous antibiotics pills are not enough and to not get them may kill you once the infection gets systemic in your blood.

Prevent Infection

- Washing Hands frequently.
- Bathe at least once every two days and change clothes and bedding frequently. Particularly socks and underwear. Never re-wear clothes, especially socks.
- NEVER touch exposed tissue or anything that penetrates tissue with unsterilized surfaces. Use latex or nitrile gloves. Nitrile gloves are more expensive but better made and no one is allergic to it.
- ONLY putting sterile things in tissue. This includes tap water, reused needles, etc.
- Be careful with handling of bodily waste and fluids.

Antibiotics

If you need antibiotics for an infection or illness and you *really know what you are doing* there is currently (2007) an exemption for veterinary fish antibiotics. These are available both at pet stores and online. Do research and find about the brand before buying. Some just divert regular meds from the human antibiotic supply chain. You can run the numbers found on the pills to find out more. If the antibiotics are expired it is usually not a problem it will just be less effective two or more years after the printed expiration date, the exception is tetracycline which becomes somewhat toxic. Obtain a few bottles or packs of these meds before you or a friend needs them; this is better than being unable to find a free clinic or depending on unresearched stuff from the neighborhood pet shop.

Urinary Tract and Bladder Infections

If you have cloudy urine, pain in urination and frequent need to urinate you likely have a urinary tract infection. The most likely cause is you have become dehydrated, even in cool weather, you need to drink more clean water. If these are the only symptoms try chugging water and pure (unsweetened) cranberry juice or crushed cranberries, if you can't get unsweetened cranberry juice you can add lemon juice or vinegar to your water to make it very tart, this will acidify your urine and help fight the infection, sugar in you food or drinks will just feed the infection. Orange juice in very large doses will help too.

If you begin to feel abdominal or lower back pain, blood in the urine, fever or chills, or worse yet swelling of the feet or face you are in trouble, the infection has gotten to the bladder and possibly the kidneys, **you need antibiotics NOW!**

Boils and Abscesses

Infected Sores are caused by bacteria getting into wound or pocket of flesh. Most of the time this is caused by an organism know as "staff" or Staphylococcus. There also are mutated forms of staff like MRSA that are very resistant and are spread to touch and is resistant to all except IV antibiotics. Other infectious bugs like E Coli also exist. Infection is spread through wash areas, hands, dirty clothes, dirty bed sheets, putting unsterile equipment and substances into exposed body tissue, and sometimes poor hospital care.

- Deep Abscesses are common in IV drug users, but stepping on a nail or getting a deep thorn or wood sliver wound can cause them too. You may need antibiotics.
- Boils are located on skin near buttocks, thighs, and sometimes other areas are from staff getting in hair follicles.
- Decubitus is a abscess common on bedbound patients who can not move in bed. It can get worse if the patient must use diapers or sweats a lot. It starts as a red spot then gradually the bacteria eats through the skin into muscle and bone within a few weeks time. Someone with this needs skilled care and must be turned every two hours and may need frequent bandage changes and heavy antibiotics.

They can be painful, can have a foul odor, be accompanied by fever and produce puss.

You can treat these by:

- Use warm (salted if possible) water to soak, soften, and remove infected yellow scabs.

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- Leave the sores open to the air or cover with light dry bandages

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- You can apply topical antibiotic (like Neosporin and the like) or vinegar
- Watch for swollen lymph nodes or lines running up your infection this is a danger sign, you need a doctor and antibiotics.

- Don't scratch on infected sores or around them, it can spread the infection to other parts of your body.
- Put a hot compress on the wound as often as possible or give it a hot soak several times a day.
- Let the abscess break itself open and drain the pus
- **NEVER try to pop or squeeze an abscess!** it can cause a local infection to go into the blood!
- Do NOT sit in one place on the abscess for extended periods of time. Turn from side to side.

Tooth Abscesses

If you get a cavity that becomes a tooth abscess and no dentist or hospital emergency room will see you, try to at least get on antibiotics. The tooth will probably have to come out before the infection destroys your jaw, spreads to your other teeth, gives you blood poisoning or an infection that can spread to your skull, bones or even your brain (Yes, really). If the old string pull method doesn't work, look for a strong friend and a filed down dull horizontal side cutter wire snips that will grip around the base of a molar. Take all the tooth parts and put them back together if it breaks apart, you need to get the parts out. Once the tooth is out the socket can also be infected, it is important that the skin be able to close and heal over the empty tooth socket.

Brush Your Teeth

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, so remember to brush and floss your teeth every day. If you don't have or prefer not to use fluoride toothpaste, use baking soda or salt. If you don't have dental floss, use sewing thread. If you don't have a toothbrush, use a clean finger or chew the end of a twig to make a little brush. The single most important factor is to rinse your mouth after meals and to stay hydrated so your natural cleaning system can work. **TAKE THIS SERIOUSLY:** Abscess' were once the single biggest cause of adult death. If it is abscessed, you need antibiotics and competent care.

DIY Toothpaste

(From Kyle Bravo's *Making Stuff and Doing Things*)

- 2 tablespoons Calcium Carbonate (also known as Chalk. Available from pottery stores. You can also take unflavored, sugarless antacid tablets and crush them into powder.)
- 1 tablespoon Baking Soda/Sodium Bicarbonate
- 1 to 2 teaspoons Glycerin (Vegetarians note: You'll want to use "Vegetable Glycerin")
- 1/2 teaspoon unsweetened flavoring (Oil of Peppermint, Cinnamon, Fennel, etc.)
- A small amount of water to moisten everything

Mix together and keep in an air-tight container. A reusable squeeze tube from a camping store will do perfectly.

DIY Oral Rinse

Take equal parts Hydrogen Peroxide and Drinking Water, mix and store in a clean plastic bottle. Take a small amount in your mouth, swirl it around for about a minute (including around your gums), then spit. It tastes bad, but it will work.

Dental Schools

While probably not good for emergencies, major cities with Dental Colleges do need patients for the students to practice on. You will have a screening to be accepted. If accepted, you can get dental work done for a greatly reduced price or even free, if they use you for boards. Expect them to take their own sweet time, though. Also, do not cancel appointments or they will drop you from the program.

Fungal Infections

Athlete's foot, Jock itch, and head ringworm are actually caused by the tinea fungus. It loves to grow in dark, moist places and feast on flesh and skin. The actual medical term differs as to its location: for example, tinea pedis is the name for when it is on the feet, for example. Tinea is spread through public showers, unwashed bed linen, touching one affected area to another, re-wearing socks and underwear, and by contact with another infected person. Try not to scratch your feet then crotch area without washing hands as you may give yourself jock itch as well. If left untreated, cracks can develop between toes, letting bacterial infection and abscesses like described above happen in addition to the fungal infection. This is particularly dangerous for those with diabetes since their feet tend to sweat more and they heal more slowly, even to the point of needing amputations in rare cases!

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Eliminating the Tinea Fungus

- Wash all bed linens, clothes, socks, etc. nightly until the infestation has gone away.
- Throw out old shoes. If this is not possible, use Goldbond Foot Powder or Baking Soda to draw out moisture and kill the fungus.
- Rotate shoes and always wear socks!
- Treat the foot with an anti-fungal cream.
- Do not share towels! Dry your feet after each shower, especially between the toes.

After you have gotten rid of this, be sure to keep your feet dry. Keep cheap baking soda around and put some in your shoes.

If you have diabetes and your foot begins to look black where the athlete's foot is, see a doctor soon.

Digestive System Bacterial Infections

While merely an inconvenience to healthy folks, digestive system infections can mean severe illness and even death to the elderly or infirmed. As with all other infections, all of these can be prevented by washing your hands, especially after eating or toileting.

Clostridium difficile

This is a real problem in the elderly and very sick. It spreads through touching infected stool. C. Diff is the natural enemy of helpful bacteria already in the intestines like E. Coli. It spreads there until it takes over the intestines leaving room for nothing else. It makes your crap very watery and very sticky, hoping to cling to anything so it can spread and thrive. Symptoms include bloating, severe diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Hospitals and nursing home facilities that do not practice good hand washing and isolation procedures have been known to have outbreaks of this stuff infecting up to half the facility.

E. Coli

Yes, we did just mention that E. Coli is a naturally occurring bacteria in your intestines and the intestines of most warm blooded mammals. It does fine there as long as it stays there, helping to finish digesting food. However, if it gets out and into someplace it can be consumed orally - like a restaurant worker who prepares food after not washing his/her hands and letting it sit to grow on the food, it can make folks very sick. Most folks call this a stomach virus, even though this is a bacterial deal, not a viral deal. This is the cause of most cases of food poisoning.

Salmonella

Salmonella is yet another "stomach virus" that causes food poisoning. It is spread by contact between cooked food and frozen food, the crap of infected humans or animals, standing water (even water on a counter not wiped up) left for a long period at room temperature, bad food preparation, and other bad food handling practices. Salmonella can survive for weeks outside a living body. They have been found in dried excrement after more than 2.5 years and is NOT destroyed by freezing .

Treatment

With most food poisoning and other intestinal illnesses, the only cure is to vomit and poo the stuff out until you feel better. However, if you do not feel better within a few days, you may need to go to a hospital.



Infections

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