

Necrotising fasciitis

Necrotising fasciitis is a rare and life-threatening infection. You can get it if a cut or wound gets infected.

It is also known as the "flesh-eating disease".

If you have necrotising fasciitis you must get treatment in a hospital quickly.

Symptoms of necrotising fasciitis

Symptoms can develop quickly within hours or over a few days.

Early symptoms may include:

- pain that seems much worse than you would expect from a cut or wound
- loss of feeling near a cut or wound
- swollen skin around the cut or wound
- [flu-like symptoms](#), such as a high temperature of 38 degrees Celsius and above
- headache and tiredness

Later symptoms can include:

- getting sick (vomiting)
- diarrhoea
- confusion
- black, purple or grey blotches and blisters on your skin (these may be less obvious on black or brown skin)

Necrotising fasciitis is very rare. The symptoms are similar to more common skin infections such as [cellulitis](#).

Call 112 or 999 or go to your nearest emergency department if:

you or someone you know has a cut or wound and:

- it is much more painful than you would expect
- has symptoms such as a high temperature, headache, tiredness and muscle aches
- are suddenly confused
- there are black, purple or grey blotches or blisters near it

[Find your nearest emergency department](#)

Causes of necrotising fasciitis

You can get necrotising fasciitis if a cut or wound gets infected.

The infection may get into the body through:

- cuts and scratches
- burns and scalds
- insect or animal bites
- surgery
- injecting drugs

You may be more at risk if you have [diabetes](#) or a weak immune system.

Treatment for necrotising fasciitis

Necrotising fasciitis gets worse quickly and you can die from it. You must get treatment in a hospital as soon as possible.

Treatment usually includes:

- [antibiotics](#)
- surgery to remove the affected area

Even after successful treatment, there may be long-term changes to the affected part of your body. Sometimes amputation is needed.

You may need more surgery and physiotherapy to help you recover.

Page last reviewed: 28 April 2023

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Saturday: 9am to 5pm

Sunday: Closed

Bank holidays: Closed

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