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Erysipeloid

Erysipeloid is a rare and acute infection of the skin caused by a specific type of bacteria.

Causes

The bacteria that cause erysipeloid are called *Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae*. This type of bacteria may be found in fish, birds, mammals, and shellfish. Erysipeloid usually affects people who work with these animals (such as farmers, butchers, cooks, grocers, fishermen, or veterinarians). Infection results when the bacteria enters the skin through small breaks.

Symptoms

Symptoms may develop in 2 to 7 days after bacteria enter the skin. Usually, the fingers and hands are affected. But any exposed area of the body can get infected if there is a break in the skin. Symptoms may include:

- Bright red skin in the infected area
- Swelling of the area
- Throbbing pain with itching or burning sensation
- Fluid-filled blisters
- Low fever if the infection spreads
- Swollen lymph nodes (sometimes)

The infection may spread to other fingers. It usually doesn't spread past the wrist.

Exams and Tests

Your health care provider will examine you. Your provider can often make the diagnosis by looking at the infected skin and by asking how your symptoms started.

Tests that may be done to confirm the diagnosis include:

- Skin biopsy and culture to check for the bacteria
- Blood tests to check for bacteria if the infection has spread

Treatment

Antibiotics, especially penicillin, are very effective to treat this condition.

Outlook (Prognosis)

Erysipeloid may get better on its own. It rarely spreads. If it does spread, the lining of the heart can become infected. This condition is called endocarditis.

Prevention

Using gloves while handling or preparing fish or meat can prevent the infection.

Alternative Names

Erysipelothricosis - erysipeloid; Skin infection - erysipeloid; Cellulitis - erysipeloid; Erysipeloid of Rosenbach; Diamond skin disease; Erysipelas

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Review Date 10/13/2024

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06/01/2028

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