

Buruli Ulcer Also, known as Bairnsdale Ulcer

➤ **Early diagnosis and prompt treatment greatly reduces the risk of extensive tissue loss.**

- The Mornington Peninsula is experiencing a marked increase of reported Buruli Ulcer cases. Over the last 3 years the incidence has increased threefold. There were 89 reported cases in Victoria in 2014. This year there has been 268 confirmed cases. Unfortunately the Mornington Peninsula is a hot spot for this disease.
- Buruli ulcer is a disease that causes significant skin ulceration, it is caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium Ulcerans*.
- The toxins made by the bacteria destroy skin cells, small blood vessels and the fat under the skin, which causes ulceration and skin loss. The infection may occur anywhere on the body, but it is often found on exposed skin such as arms and legs.
- Although the exact mechanism of spread to humans is unknown it is thought that the bacteria gets under your skin from either insect bites (mainly mosquitoes) or from cuts being exposed

to the bacteria in soil. The bacterium has been detected in wildlife such as possums, mosquitoes and aquatic insects and soil.

- Since the ulcer gets bigger with time, early diagnosis and prompt treatment can minimize significant tissue damage.

Symptoms

- Unlike other ulcers, the infection usually presents as a painless red lump or small growing ulcer. Often painless, sometimes itchy.
- It is common to mistake early symptoms of the infection for a spider bite. It can take between 1-9 months for symptoms to develop after the bacteria has got under your skin.

Treatment

- Most Buruli ulcers can be treated with a long course of oral antibiotics and regular wound dressings.

Prevention

- Reduce the risk of infection while outdoors or working in the garden:
- Suggestions to reduce the risk of infection include:
 - Avoid insect bites by using repellent.
 - Wear gardening gloves, long sleeved shirts and trousers while working outdoors.
 - Promptly wash and cover any scratches or cuts you receive while working outdoors.

Should you have any concerning lesions, we recommend that you seek medical advice from your doctor. Ask the question, "Could it be a Buruli ulcer?"



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