

## Unusual Skin Conditions – Part 4

### Necrotizing Fasciitis

#### What Is It?

Also known as flesh-eating bacteria, necrotizing fasciitis is a rapidly progressive inflammatory infection of the fascia, with secondary necrosis of the subcutaneous tissues. The speed of spread is directly proportional to the thickness of the subcutaneous layer. Necrotizing fasciitis moves along the fascial plane facilitated by bacterial enzymes and toxins. This deep infection causes vascular occlusion, ischemia, and tissue necrosis. Superficial nerves are damaged, producing the characteristic localized anesthesia. Septicemia ensues with systemic toxicity.

#### How Does It Occur?

Necrotizing fasciitis may occur as a complication of a variety of surgical procedures or medical conditions, including cardiac catheterization, vein sclerotherapy and diagnostic laparoscopy, among others. It may also be idiopathic, as in scrotal or penile necrotizing fasciitis. The causative bacteria may be aerobic, anaerobic, or mixed flora. The frequency of necrotizing fasciitis has been on the rise because of an increase in immunocompromised patients with diabetes mellitus, cancer, alcoholism, vascular insufficiencies, organ transplants, HIV infection, or neutropenia.

#### How Is It Treated?

Once the diagnosis of necrotizing fasciitis is confirmed, initiate treatment without delay. Because necrotizing fasciitis is a surgical emergency, the patient should be admitted immediately to a surgical intensive care unit. A regimen of surgical debridement is continued until tissue necrosis ceases and the growth of fresh viable tissue is observed. If a limb or organ is involved, amputation may be necessary because of irreversible necrosis and gangrene or because of overwhelming toxicity, which occasionally occurs. Prompt surgery ensures a higher likelihood of survival.

#### Sources:

1. Richard F. Edlich, MD, PhD, FACS, FACEP, et al. "Necrotizing Fasciitis", *Medscape WebMD*, Aug 90, 2016. <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/2051157-overview#a3>.



Necrotizing fasciitis in the left lower leg.



An example of necrotizing fasciitis.

## Educational Materials

Gentell can provide educational materials for your staff on topics related to wound care, wound assessments, product selection, documentation requirements, NPUAP guidelines, preparing for state audits and more. We can also conduct in service trainings on these topics and create custom in services to meet your facility needs.

Speak to your Gentell representative for more information.

***Gentell leads the wound care industry in new product development and innovative cost-containment (capitation) programs for hospitals, nursing homes and home health agencies. For more information, call 800-840-9041 or visit our website at [www.gentell.com](http://www.gentell.com)***