



Maggots (Myiasis)

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Myiasis refers to the infestation of living vertebrates by maggots. Many different species of fly cause cutaneous disease, and several different syndromes have been described. The type most commonly seen in homeless persons is myiasis of wounds and body cavities, as seen above.

Flies are attracted to the blood and pus found in open wounds and body cavities. The flies lay eggs, and the larvae enter diseased skin or wounds soon after hatching. Many of these species remain confined to the necrotic tissue and keep the wound clean. Some species are able to invade viable tissues, and this can cause significant local destruction.

Treatment consists primarily of manual removal of the larvae and debridement (cleaning) of the affected tissue. We have had good success with the application of ether (or 15% chloroform in cooking oil) to the area prior to extraction. The larvae are immobilized and much easier to remove. ■

*Maggots.
This gentleman was seen in the Pine Street Inn with an open sore of his foot caused by pressure from his boot. Maggots invaded the wound and removed the necrotic tissue, keeping the area clean.
Photo by
James O'Connell MD*

(left)
Maggots.
Flies are attracted to open wounds and lay eggs. The larvae hatch and live on the necrotic skin, keeping the wounds clean.



(right)
Maggots.
Maggots can sometimes invade the viable tissue around wounds and body cavities.



Photos courtesy of
Richard Major
Australian Museum

References

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