

Erysipeloid

Background Information

Erysipeloid is a rare bacterial skin condition. It can be acquired from a wide range of infected animals. The disease is rare in humans in the UK.

Organism

Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae

Incidence and Transmission

Erysipeloid is a rare human disease in the UK.

It is acquired by contact with infected animals (particularly pigs), fish or birds. The bacteria enter the body through existing skin wounds such as cuts, scratches, punctures or splinters.

The disease does not spread from person to person.

Occupations and processes where erysipeloid may present a risk

Occupational exposure to *Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae* may occur in those who:

- are in contact with infected animals, birds or fish; or
- work with materials or products from infected animals, birds or fish.

Occupations where there may be a risk of occupationally acquired erysipeloid include:

- farmers;
- fishermen and workers in the fishing industry;
- abattoir workers, meat processing plant workers and butchers;
- cooks; and
- veterinary surgeons;

Clinical Information

The incubation period is up to one week, but may be longer.

In most cases this is a skin disease. Symptoms are red/purple skin lesions with a smooth shiny surface, most commonly on the fingers, hands or forearms although they can occur on any exposed areas of the body.

Antibiotic treatment is available, but most cases will get better within 2–4 weeks without treatment.

In very rare cases infection lead to a severe, possibly life-threatening disease. Anyone with skin lesions and severe, more generalised symptoms should seek medical attention immediately, as prompt treatment is important.

Control

The following control measures reduce the risk of infection:

- Good occupational hygiene practices should be followed, especially washing with warm water and soap.
- Cuts and abrasions should be covered with waterproof plasters.
- Suitable protective clothing should be worn, particularly gloves.
- A suitable disinfectant should be used.

Further Information

[Public Health England – Erysipeloid](#)