

The Match.com STD causes genitals to erupt into flesh eating ulcers

 Donovanosis - Image: American Urological Association

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The first case of a super-rare sexually transmitted disease which causes the genitals to erupt into flesh eating ulcers has been diagnosed in Southport.

According to an FOI submitted by online pharmacy chemist-4-u.com, the unusual sexually transmitted disease has been diagnosed in a woman between the age of 15 and 25 in the past 12 months in the region.

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HAVE YOUR SAY

 *Pharmacist Shamir Patel*
Pharmacist Shamir Patel

If left untreated, donovanosis causes nasty genital ulcers which grow and spread before flesh in the groin region starts to eat itself.

There have been no previous cases of the the disease which is usually only found in far-flung tropical and subtropical countries such as southeast India, Guyana and New Guinea.

The British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) say they have carried out past searches for UK cases, but appear to have drawn a blank.

How is donovanosis spread?

Sex with an infected person is not the only means of catching the disease which affects twice as many men as women.

Simple contact with a victim's bleeding ulcer is enough for it to be passed on.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can begin to show anywhere between one to 12 weeks after coming into contact with the bacteria.

Without treatment, the ulcers increase in size. Other bacteria can also attack the ulcers which then generate a foul smell.

Half of infected men and women have sores in the anal area, which appear as small, red beefy lumps.

The bumps will eventually erode but as the disease spreads it starts to destroy tissues in the infected area.

Complications can include; permanent genital damage and scarring, loss of skin colour and irreversible genital swelling due to the scarring.

Pharmacist Shamir Patel, of Chemist 4 U, said: "This is a very rare and nasty condition and it could be one of the first times it has been recorded in the UK.

"Although antibiotics can treat donovanosis, early-stage cases might be going undiagnosed because it's so uncommon in the UK.

"Bacteria that cause the disease, known as *klebsiella granulomatis*, infect the skin around the genitals, groin or anal area and causes lesions and skin disintegration as the flesh effectively consumes itself.

"Donovanosis itself can be treated with antibiotics, time is of the essence.

"Any delay could cause the flesh around the genitals to literally rot away.

"This bacteria is also a risk factor in the transmission of HIV."

A spokesperson for Public Health England added: "Donovanosis primarily occurs in tropical countries or regions of the Americas, Southern Africa and Oceania.

"It is very rarely diagnosed and reported in the UK."

Chemist-4-u.com contacted hospital trusts nationwide to find out how many diagnosis of STIs there had been, the age of people diagnosed, what sex and what region of the country they live in as part of extensive research into 'The Great British STI Taboo'.

To view more findings and research visit www.chemist-4-u.com/guides/pharmaceutical-advice/great-british-sti-survey