

Flesh-eating Match.com dating disease causes genitals to rot away

There have been no previous cases in the UK of the rare sexually transmitted disease also known as Granuloma inguinale - until now

By [Amy Coles](#) Kate McMullin

This is what the bacteria, which causes Donovanosis - a flesh eating STI, looks like under a microscope (Image: Liverpool Echo)

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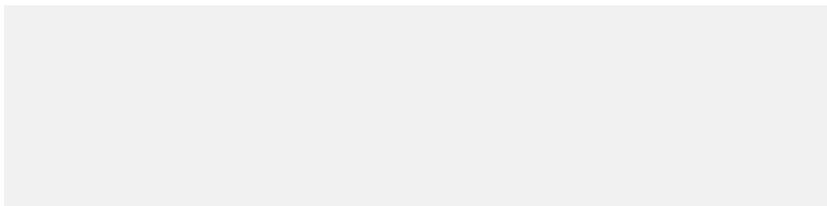
A sexually transmitted disease which causes the genitals to erupt into flesh-eating ulcers has been detected for the first time in the UK and it's making a comeback in other countries too.

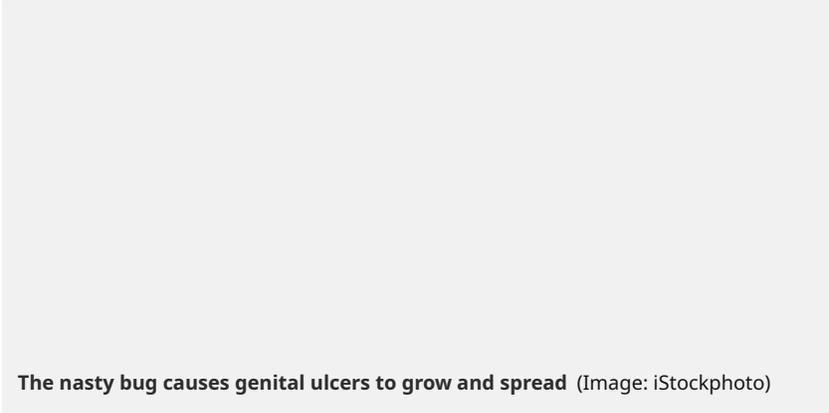
Usually found in far-flung tropical countries, there have been no previous cases of the rare STI Donovanosis recorded in the UK. That is until now.

The nasty bug causes genital ulcers to grow and spread. If left untreated flesh in the groin literally starts to eat itself.

And according to a Freedom of Information request, submitted by online pharmacy chemist-4-u.com, the rare sexually transmitted disease Donovanosis has been diagnosed three times.

Twice in Bolton and once in a woman, between the age of 15 and 25, in Southport in the past 12 months.





The nasty bug causes genital ulcers to grow and spread (Image: iStockphoto)

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

Infections typically occur in the genital area, but they can also appear around the nose, mouth and chest. In all, there are four types of Donovanosis to be aware of.

The first is fleshy red ulcers that bleed when touched, known as ulcerogranulomatous.

Secondly, a dry ulcer with a raised, uneven edge, this is known as the hypertrophic or verrucous type.

A necrotic infection is deep and foul smelling and causes severe damage to the tissues.

A sclerotic or cicatricial infection is a dry lesion with scar tissue.

Sex with an infected person is not the only means of catching the disease, which is twice as likely to affect men than women.

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The infection can cause a 'foul smell' (Image: iStockphoto)

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Simple contact with a victim's bleeding ulcer is enough for it to be passed on and symptoms can show one to 12 weeks after coming into contact with the bacteria.

And without treatment, the ulcers increase in size and 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.

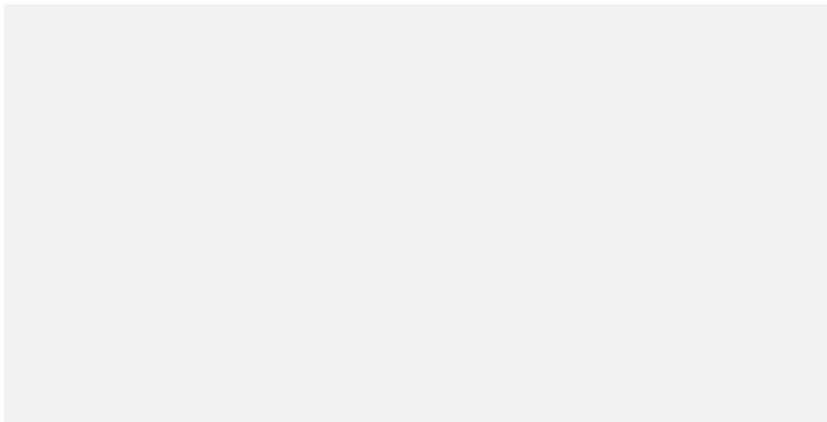
The bumps gradually erode but as the disease spreads it starts to destroy tissues in the infected area.

There are also possible complications involved in contracting the disease, which can include permanent genital damage and scarring, loss of skin colour and irreversible genital swelling due to the scarring.

The disease is usually found in tropical and subtropical countries such as southeast India, Guyana and New Guinea, and due to its rarity in Britain it doesn't appear on most STI lists, compiled by UK sexual health websites.

But it's now far from being contained to far-flung places and instead is making a comeback in Australia and South Africa too.

The British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) said it has not found any previous cases in the UK.



Pharmacist Shamir Patel, of Chemist 4 U (Image: Liverpool Echo)



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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' *

For more information click [here](#).