FACT SHEET

Tropical & Travel Dermatology: How to Avoid Parasites in Your Paradise

- More than 1 million Americans travel to developing nations each year.
- Travelers are at risk for illnesses or injury due to infections and environmental hazards that are uncommon in industrialized nations.
- Up to 75 percent of travelers report some health impairment during or immediately after traveling abroad.
  - It is estimated that up to 10 percent of travelers have infections or illnesses related directly to their skin.
  - Sun overexposure is the most frequent dermatologic problem experienced by tourists in South America.
- The increased presence of the United States military in developing countries has exposed thousands of soldiers and supporting personnel to dermatologic diseases unusual in North America.

Tropical Skin Infections

Creeping Eruption

- This infection is caused by larvae from dog and cat feces after it is deposited on beaches.
- When the larvae penetrates the traveler’s skin, red fluid-filled bumps form in a winding pattern as the worm advances a few millimeters per day.
- A dermatologist can prescribe an oral medication to treat this infection.

Jiggers

- This infection is caused when a fertilized female sand flea penetrates a traveler’s skin and burrows into tissue. The infection is characterized by an itchy lesion normally located on the soles of the feet or toes.
- The lesion appears as a whitish, round-shaped nodule on the skin with a black central spot.
- A dermatologist can remove the nodule by performing a simple surgical procedure that does not require anesthesia.

Cutaneous Myiasis

- This infection develops after a human botfly larvae egg is deposited in human tissue by a blood-sucking insect.
- The initial infection has a boil-like appearance that may be accompanied by some discharge.
Eventually the larvae protrude through the infection site and patients may experience a stinging sensation as if there was something ‘moving’ inside the skin.

A dermatologist can surgically remove the larvae after a diagnosis has been established.

**Tropical Fungal Infections**

**Sporotrichosis**
- This is the most common fungal infection in South America and normally is transmitted after the skin is punctured by a thorn or an animal bite.
- The affected skin becomes inflamed, red, and tender and may become ulcerated and secrete fluids.
- First prescribed in 1903, the same oral medication is still an effective treatment today.

**Chromomycosis**
- A group of fungal infections that enter the body through contact with wood splinters or thorns.
- Most common on the arms and legs, the infection begins as pink, scaly pimples that progress to lumps with black dots.
- In addition to oral medications, a surgical procedure known as cryosurgery (the application of extreme cold to destroy diseased tissue) also has been shown to be an effective treatment.

**Tinea Nigra**
- A rare fungal infection which causes a traveler’s palms or soles to darken.
- While it may be confused with melanoma, it can be treated with a topical fungal cream.

**White and Black Piedra**
- Affecting the hair shaft, this fungal infection causes small brittle bumps that resemble stones.
- Black piedra is found only on scalp hairs of travelers in tropical areas.
- White piedra can be found on hairs that cover the entire human body.
- These infections can be treated by shaving the hair or shampooing with an anti-fungal medication.

See your dermatologist for successful diagnosis and treatment of skin, hair and nail conditions.

Find a dermatologist by visiting the American Academy of Dermatology’s Web site at [www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org).