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Red flags: Small wounds and catastrophic consequences

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Necrotizing fasciitis is a soft tissue infection that can rapidly progress and end lethally if not treated early and radically. With an extremely low prevalence (0.02% of all pediatric in hospital cases), most physicians will probably only see very few cases during their career. Unlike adult patients, the majority of children affected by this disease are healthy individuals. There is no chronic disease and necrotizing fasciitis often arises from minor lesions. We present two cases treated in our clinic within the past year. Our first case of necrotizing fasciitis was a 5 years old Caucasian male patient with a varicella lesion on the back. The second case, a 4 year old Caucasian male patient, presented after an insect bite at the lower limb. Both cases were triggered by a super infection after scratching. Rapid surgical treatment is necessary to reduce morbidity and mortality in cases of necrotizing fasciitis. Due to the rarity of the disease it is often misdiagnosed by physicians. We emphasize the importance of staying alert and to keep necrotizing fasciitis in mind.

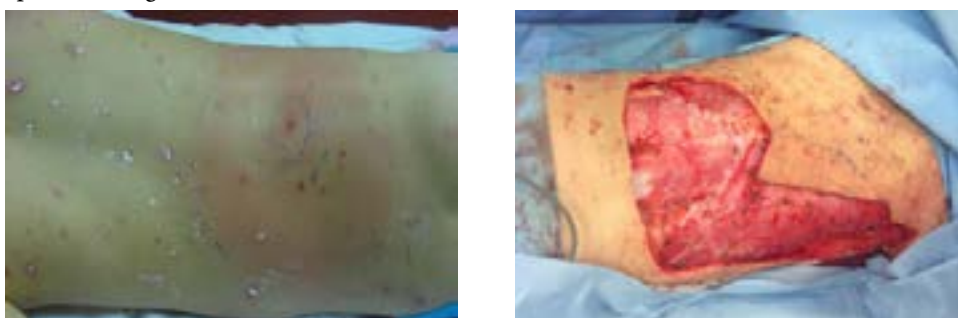


Figure: Preoperative findings of necrotizing fasciitis following varicella infection on the back (left) and intraoperative result after the entire necrotic fascia was debrided (right)

Recent Publications

1. Zundel S, et al. (2016) Diagnosis and treatment of pediatric necrotizing fasciitis: a systematic review of the literature. *Eur J Pediatr Surg*, 27(2):127-137.
2. Eneli, I and H D Davies (2007) Epidemiology and outcome of necrotizing fasciitis in children: an active surveillance study of the Canadian Paediatric Surveillance Program. *J Pediatr*, 151(1):79-84.
3. Fustes-Morales A, et al. (2002) Necrotizing fasciitis: report of 39 pediatric cases. *Arch Dermatol*. 138(7):893-9.
4. Moss R L, C A Musemeche and A M Kosloske (1996) Necrotizing fasciitis in children: prompt recognition and aggressive therapy improve survival. *J Pediatr Surg*. 31(8):1142-6.
5. Shirley R, S Mackey and P Meagher (2011) Necrotising fasciitis: sequelae of varicella zoster infection. *J Plast Reconstr Aesthet Surg*. 64(1):123-7.

Biography

Stefan Holland-Cunz is the Head of the Department of Pediatric Surgery at University Hospital of Basel. He is an expert in Visceral and Neonatal Surgery as well as in Pediatric Trauma Care. New wound therapy concepts are often evaluated and new approaches are developed at the unit and emergency unit at the University Hospital of Basel.

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