

FACTSHEET

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Cutaneous leishmaniasis

What is cutaneous leishmaniasis?

Cutaneous (meaning 'skin') leishmaniasis is a chronic infection caused by a microscopic parasite, *Leishmania*. It causes ulcers or scabs which occur more frequently on exposed body parts such as the wrists, the ankles and lower legs, and the face

How is it caught?

It is caught when a person is bitten by a sand-fly which has picked up the parasite after biting an infected animal. It cannot be passed on from an infected child or adult to another person. There are no sand-flies in Australia known to pass on the infection.

All children seen with cutaneous leishmaniasis in Australia have caught their infection overseas, such as in Afghanistan, Africa, The Middle East including Iran, Pakistan or in South America.

What is the treatment?

Mild cases do not need any treatment, and will get better on their own. For more severe cases, for example where sores are affecting the face, we often start treatment with fluconazole by mouth (syrup or tablets). Other treatments, for persistent infection, include repeated injections around the skin sore or infusing a medicine through an intravenous drip for several days.

How easy is it to cure?

Cutaneous leishmaniasis is a chronic condition. It grows slowly and treatment is slow to cure the condition. Eventually all infections can be treated successfully, but scarring can occur.

Do the skin lesions need to be covered?

No. The sores are not infectious to others. Covering the skin lesions may stop them drying up.

Can my child go to school?

Children with cutaneous leishmaniasis are not infectious to other children. There is no reason to prevent them from attending school due to this condition. If the school does not understand, your doctor will be happy to ring or write to the school.

Remember:

- Leishmaniasis is not infectious
- Children can go to school as usual
- Keep the sores clean
- Medication may be needed for persistent infection