

# Necrotizing Fasciitis

## A guide to compensation

### Expert advice

Necrotizing fasciitis is a serious bacterial skin infection that eats away at underlying body tissues, muscle and skin. It's often referred to as a "flesh-eating bug", but the bacteria don't "eat" flesh, they release toxins that cause severe damage to nearby tissue. It's not contagious. It can develop from a small cut or minor injury, and can very quickly spread. It can be life-threatening if not diagnosed and treated early on. The NHS estimates that, even when treated, one or two in every five cases are fatal. Because severe cases can result in long-term disability due to amputation or the removal of extensive infected tissue, ongoing rehabilitation and support may be required to help people who survive the infection.

Slater and Gordon's medical negligence team has many years' experience in dealing with misdiagnosed and untreated cases of necrotizing fasciitis. If you've been affected, and need legal advice, please contact one of our specialists.



### Who's at risk of developing necrotizing fasciitis?

Necrotizing fasciitis can affect men, women and children of all ages.

### What are the common causes of necrotizing fasciitis?

Common causes of necrotizing fasciitis include:

- cuts
- scratches
- animal and insect bites
- puncture wounds caused by needles
- surgical wounds

### What are the symptoms of necrotizing fasciitis?

Early symptoms of necrotizing fasciitis include:

- small painful cut or scratch
- pain that is disproportionate to skin damage
- high temperature
- flu-like symptoms

After a few hours to days, symptoms may include:

- swelling and redness
- diarrhoea and vomiting
- dark blotches that turn into fluid-filled blisters
- dizziness and/or weakness
- confusion

### Can necrotizing fasciitis be treated?

Necrotizing fasciitis must be diagnosed early and treated immediately in hospital. Antibiotics are administered directly into the vein, but in some cases bacterial toxins can destroy soft tissue and reduce blood flow, antibiotics may not reach all of the infected and dying areas.

Treatment may be given to control blood pressure, fluid levels and organ functions. Surgery may be done to remove infected tissue. In severe cases surgery may be carried out several times to ensure the infected tissue is removed, and on occasion amputation may be necessary to remove an infected limb.

### How can you prevent necrotizing fasciitis?

As necrotizing fasciitis is caused by bacteria entering the body via broken skin, it is important to treat wounds quickly and carefully – regardless of size. If you have an open wound, a blister, a needle puncture or any break in the skin you should keep them covered with clean, dry bandages until healed. You should also wash your hands regularly with warm water and soap, and use alcohol-based hand gels.

### What should you do if you think you have necrotizing fasciitis?

Necrotizing fasciitis should be considered a medical emergency. If you think you have it you should call 999 for an ambulance if you are unable to get yourself to A&E. Blood tests and scans may be carried out. Necrotizing fasciitis may be confirmed by an operation to examine the affected tissue.

# Advice on making a claim for compensation

For those who don't have experience of the legal process, contacting a lawyer and making a claim for compensation can be a daunting prospect. However, we're with our clients every step of the way, ensuring they understand the claims process, and relieving the burden of having to deal with a variety of practical issues, at what can be a difficult time.



## What should you do if you think you have a claim?

Contact us. Our team of specialists have a vast amount of experience in dealing with cases of medical negligence. Many of our lawyers are classed as leaders in their field by independent legal guides.

Once we've taken details, we'll confirm whether or not you have a claim. If you're entitled to compensation, we can start work on your case straightaway and begin gathering evidence.

Time limits apply when making a claim for compensation, so don't delay in contacting us.

## What is the cost of making a claim?

We understand that the cost of legal advice can be a worry, but there are options available to fund medical negligence claims.

You may have legal expenses insurance under an existing insurance policy which entitles you to free representation. If legal expenses insurance is not in place, we may be able to conduct your case under a Conditional Fee Agreement, also known as a 'No Win, No Fee' Agreement. This means if the case fails, no payment is due. There are certain medical negligence cases where Legal Aid may be available.

Once we know the circumstances of your claim, we'll be able to discuss your funding options in more detail.

## What is the amount of compensation likely to be?

Compensation will be based on the severity of the injury, and also on the personal circumstances of the injured person. For example, if they are unable to work as a result of the injury, loss of earnings may be accounted for. If they were responsible for household chores or caring for a dependent and are no longer able to, the cost of assistance will be taken into account.

If rehabilitation, treatment, aids, equipment or adaptations are required, we will also seek to recover these costs.

## How long is the case likely to take?

Every case is different so it's difficult to estimate how long a case is likely to take without first reviewing the circumstances. However, the case will be dealt with by an expert in medical negligence who will deal with the case as quickly and efficiently as possible.

## Frequently asked questions

### Will I have to go to court?

It's very rare that a medical negligence case will actually go to trial. A large majority of cases settle before a trial takes place. However, if the case doesn't settle before trial, attendance at court may be necessary.

### What if the injured person died as a result of the medical negligence?

In the event that you lost a loved one as a result of medical negligence, a claim can still be made by the estate's executor (the person named in the will if there is one) or otherwise by a family member.

### What if I live outside the UK?

If you live outside the UK, or if the medical negligence occurred whilst outside the UK, it may still be possible to claim for compensation.

We have a team of experts who deal with claims for injuries which occurred outside the UK. They understand the laws which apply and the complex procedure involved.

### What if I need assistance in other areas?

We have expert lawyers in many areas of law such as family, employment, welfare benefits, trusts, Court of Protection and disability rights and work closely with those departments to ensure that you get the best possible outcome.