



Did you know covering a cut helps it heal faster?

May 17, 2001

[Good Morning America](#) [World News Tonight](#) [20/20](#) [PrimeTime](#) [Nightline](#) [WI](#)

HEALTH

GO TO:

[HOMEPAGE](#) » [HEALTH](#) » [FEATURE](#)

- ▶ [HOMEPAGE](#)
- ▶ [NEWS SUMMARY](#)
- ▶ [U.S.](#)
- ▶ [INTERNATIONAL](#)
- ▶ [MONEYScope](#)
- ▶ [WEATHER.com](#)
- ▶ [LOCAL NEWS](#)
- ▶ [ENTERTAINMENT](#)
- ▶ [SPORTS](#)
- ▶ [SCI / TECH](#)
- ▶ [POLITICS](#)
- ▶ [HEALTH](#)
- ▶ [LIFESTYLES](#)
- ▶ [TRAVEL](#)
- ▶ [VIDEO & AUDIO](#)
- ▶ [WEBCASTS](#)
- ▶ [COMMUNITY](#)

Agony of the Feet Contaminated Pedicurist's Bath Gave Customers Boils

By Michael S. James

April 27 — A trip to the beauty salon was anything but pretty for more than 100 women in California.

A contaminated pedicurist's footbath led to unsightly and potentially disfiguring boils on 109 customers' legs ranging in size from a nickel to a half-dollar, a disease investigator with the federal Centers for Disease Control concluded.

The infections can be treated slowly with antibiotics, but can be painful and unsightly, and may leave scarring. Most people infected in the California outbreak had multiple sores or boils. One woman had 37 boils.

"It was something that caught everyone by surprise; it could have happened really anywhere," said Kevin Winthrop, epidemic intelligence service officer for the CDC. "I think the take-home message here is that this incident in Santa Cruz County was a wake-up call to the owners as well as the managers of these types of salons ... to keep these types of machines clean."

State and federal health investigators believe a germ known as *Mycobacterium fortuitum* contaminated a footbath at a salon in Watsonville, Calif., and caused boils and lesions on the legs of as many as 108 women and one man last fall. Health officials also are investigating the case of a woman who may have been infected by another footbath in the San Diego area.

First Outbreak of Its Type?

Winthrop said officials at the CDC had heard of individual cases in which people were attacked by the bacterium through an infection or a traumatic wound, but they had never heard of a communal outbreak of this type.

"It's well known that these types of bacteria inhabit potable water systems, but they're normally found in very low concentrations, and not high enough to cause infection," Winthrop said. "We believe there was a tremendous amount of organic debris that had been built up in this [Watsonville] machine."

The debris — including hair, toenails and grease — may have contributed to an unusually high concentration of the bacteria, Winthrop said.

New Standards

The Watsonville salon, Fancy Nails, closed in October and has since been sold,



[FAMILY.COM](#)

[REFERENCE](#)

[COOL DOWNLOADS](#)
[SEND THIS PAGE TO A FRIEND](#)

[EMAIL](#)
[ABCNEWS.com](#)

[HELP & TOOLS](#)



[SEARCH](#)
[ABCNEWS](#)

[RELATEL](#)
[Unsanitary Nail Salons](#)



according to Rick Lopes, a spokesman for the California Bureau of Barbering & Cosmetology.

Meanwhile, the state is attempting to establish standards for cleaning the footbaths regularly, and disseminating a list of sanitary recommendations to salons, cosmetology schools and footbath manufacturers.

"We want it to be really, really clear, because our main goal is that these things are cleaned properly," Lopes said. "Anybody who ever goes into a salon [should] look around, see how clean it appears." ■

PRINT THIS PAGE SEND THIS TO A FRIEND

[LINK BACK TO TOP ▲](#)

[SEARCH](#)
ABCNEWS

abc NEWS.com

SECTIONS

Select a section ▼

GO TO: Select a Topic ▼

Copyright © 2001 ABC News Internet Ventures. Click here for Press Information, Terms of Use & Privacy Policy & Internet Safety Information applicab

ABCNEWS.com family of sites:

[ABC.com](#)

[ESPN.com](#)

[Disney.com](#)

[Family.com](#)

[Mr.Showbiz](#)