



New World screwworm

What You Need to Know

New World screwworm (NWS) is species of parasitic fly that feeds on the flesh of warm-blooded animals and people. NWS flies lay eggs in wounds and body openings. The eggs hatch into maggots (larvae) that eat live tissue, causing a worsening, often painful and foul-smelling wound.

Signs & Symptoms

- Feeling maggots move or seeing maggots within a skin wound or sore, or in the ears, nose, eyes, mouth or genitals.
- Painful skin wounds or sores that worsen within a few days.
- A foul-smelling odor from the site of the infestation.
- Bleeding from open sores.

Wounds caused by New World screwworm maggots may also get infected by bacteria, which can cause symptoms like fever or chills.

Risk Factors

You may be more likely to get NWS if you are in areas where the flies are present and

- Spend a lot of time outdoors during the day, especially if sleeping or unable to keep flies away, or with warm-blooded animals.
- Have any open wounds or sores, no matter how small.

Prevent NWS

If you are in an area where NWS are present

- Keep open wounds clean and covered, no matter how small or location on the body.
- Sleep indoors with closed or screened windows. If outside, sleep under a bed net or in a screened tent.
- Protect your skin from insect bites by
 - » Using an EPA-registered insect repellent.
 - » Treating clothing and gear with 0.5% permethrin.
 - » Wearing loose-fitting clothing that limits exposed skin.

How NWS Spreads

NWS infestations begin when a female fly lays eggs on open wounds or other parts of the body in live, warm-blooded animals. Most infestations occur in animals like livestock, pets, or wildlife, but they also occur in people. Eggs hatch into maggots that burrow into and eat living flesh. After feeding for about 7 days, larvae drop to the ground, burrow into the soil, and emerge as adult screwworm flies.



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Treatment

- If you see or feel maggots in or on a wound or other area of your body, contact a healthcare provider immediately. Tell them if you have recently traveled to Central or South America, the Caribbean, or Mexico.
- Your healthcare provider will remove each maggot, sometimes surgically.
- Do not try to remove any maggots or egg masses yourself. If any fall out of the wound, place them in a leak-proof container with rubbing alcohol to kill them. Bring them with you to your healthcare provider.

NWS in Animals

If you see maggots on any animal, whether livestock, pets, or wildlife, contact a veterinarian. Visit [screwworm.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/new-world-screwworm) for more information about NWS in animals.

Prevent Spread

Do not throw any live maggots in the trash or outside as this could result in NWS spreading in your area.



New World screwworm maggot (left) next to a nickel, for size comparison. Image courtesy of Mark Fox, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



The New World screwworm flies have orange eyes, a metallic blue or green body, and three darker-shaded stripes along their backs. Image courtesy of Denise Bonilla, U.S. Department of Agriculture.



New World screwworm infestation in a patient's leg. Image courtesy of Dr Isaac Bogoch, Toronto General Hospital.

Learn more

www.cdc.gov/new-world-screwworm

