Overview

This is a serious, painful infection that can spread quickly through soft tissues. If it's not treated properly, you can die from it.

Causes

What causes this infection? Well, it usually begins when bacteria get through a break in your skin. It can happen if ocean water gets into an open wound. You can get it from an insect bite. You can get an infection from a surgical procedure. And, in some cases an infection starts with a muscle strain or bruise that doesn't even cause a break in the skin.

Symptoms

Symptoms usually begin within hours. The infection site feels tender and painful. At first, you may think you just have a muscle injury. Then, your symptoms get worse. You may have a fever, a sore throat, aches, chills and other problems. You may mistake these for the flu. Eventually, the infection site may get very red and swollen, and blisters may form. You can have severe symptoms such as a high fever, fast heart rate and low blood pressure. If you don't get treatment, you can go into shock and have organ failure. You can lose consciousness and die.

Treatment

Necrotizing fasciitis is treated with IV antibiotics and with surgery to remove dead tissue. Most people who get help early enough can be treated successfully. Your doctor will create a plan that's right for you.