

Tequesta Family Practice

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Abscess Assistance CAM

Painful inflammatory swelling of a hair follicle that forms an abscess; typically appears as a small rounded or conical nodule surrounded by redness, progressing to a localized pus pocket with a white center.

There is tenderness and pain and, if severe, mild fever. Staphylococcus aureus is cultured from the abscess.

QUICK REVIEW

- Recurrent attacks of boils can indicate a depressed immune system.
- Tea tree oil is an effective topical treatment of boils.
- If the boil is severe or does not resolve within two to three days, a physician should be consulted immediately.

TREATMENT SUMMARY

Eliminate from the diet any foods that may suppress immune function (sugar, refined simple carbohydrates, and food allergens). If the boil is severe or does not resolve within two to three days, a physician should be consulted immediately since the infection can spread through the subcutaneous (under the skin) tissues (causing cellulitis-inflammation of the connective tissue) or into the bloodstream (causing bacteremia-bacteria in the blood).

Cleanliness should be rigorously maintained.

Nutritional Supplements

- Vitamin C: 500-1,000 mg three times per day
- Vitamin A: 50,000 IU per day for up to two days in infants and up to one week in adults (NOTE: Do not use vitamin A in sexually active women of childbearing age without effective birth control due to the link to birth defects at high dosages.)

Zinc: 30 mg per day

Botanical Medicines

Tea tree oil (*Melaleuca alternifolia*):

apply undiluted oil to affected area two to three times daily

- Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) poultice: 1 tablespoon of the root powder mixed with water or egg white to form a paste; apply to abscess and cover with an absorbent bandage twice daily.

Other Recommendations

The infected area should be immobilized and not handled, except when necessary to change the poultice. If tea tree oil or goldenseal poultices are not available or if localization, rupture, and drainage are preferred, hot Epsom salts packs will bring an abscess to a head (soak a washcloth in 2 tablespoons of Epsom salts per cup of hot water).