

Maggots worm back into favour



ZooBiotic's dressing keeps the maggots contained in a specially designed pouch but still allows them to cleanse the wound

As strange as it may seem, maggots have been used for centuries to treat wounds. Until the 1940s, 'surgical maggots' were a common sight in hospitals. But the advent of antibiotics – and our natural aversion to creepy crawlies – saw them all but disappear.

Even in today's high-tech culture, though, many healthcare professionals are recognising the considerable advantages maggot therapy can offer over conventional treatments for wounds. To date, it's estimated that 50,000 people worldwide have been treated with medicinal quality maggots since the mid 1990s.

Eaten alive?

The therapy works because maggots only eat dead and infected tissue, leaving healthy tissue

untouched. They also secrete chemicals that clean wounds and kill bacteria, which helps a wound to heal.

People with diabetes are more likely to be admitted to hospital with a foot ulcer than with any other diabetic complication – and conventional treatment can take months to work. However, maggot therapy can heal ulcers so effectively that many people can be treated in a matter of days without having to stay in hospital. Usually, no more than two treatments with maggot therapy are required, each lasting a maximum of five days.

However, for some people (including some healthcare professionals), the thought of seeing and handling the maggots puts them off the treatment. Luckily then, modern medicine has developed special dressings that make this treatment more palatable.

Modern maggots

"Many health treatments are derived from nature, and reinvented with a sophisticated modern approach," explains ZooBiotic Clinical Nurse Advisor Viv Pyatt. ZooBiotic manufactures BioFoam dressings, which contain maggots in a sealed pouch that still allows the wound to be cleaned of dead tissue and infection, without the risk of the maggots ever coming into contact with the person receiving the treatment.

"Now that maggots of medicinal quality are produced in a sterile environment, and applied to the patient in a sealed dressing, they are much more user friendly." □

Further information

If you have a foot ulcer or other wound, talk to your healthcare professional to find out whether maggot therapy is available and suitable for you.

Myth: Healthy eating just means buying foods labelled as healthy

The reality: Packaging that has the words 'healthy' or 'good for you' written on it may help you to identify foods that are lower in fat, sugar and salt, or higher in fibre, but they won't necessarily be all of these. Healthy eating involves choosing a range of foods low in fat, sugar and salt, including plenty of fruit and vegetables. Variety and balancing choices are more important than focusing on low-fat, low-sugar foods alone. And bear in mind that some foods are naturally low in fat, sugar or salt, or high in fibre, even if it doesn't say so on the packaging. For example, starchy foods such as cereals and pastas are always low in fat, yet, confusingly, some brands are promoted as 'low in fat', making you think they are healthier than other brands.