

Woman Nearly Loses Leg After Contracting Life-Threatening Infection From Hot Tub

It's known as "hot tub rash"—and the photos are intense.



By [Korin Miller](#) Jul 26, 2019

An Indiana mom is happy to be alive after contracting a serious and aggressive bacterial infection she thinks she contracted from a hotel hot tub.

Taylor Bryant took a vacation to Tennessee with her husband and their two young children earlier this month. During that time, she sat in her hotel's hot tub, she told WISH News 8. While they were there, Bryant said she started to feel nauseous and had some cramping in her right leg. But a day after her symptoms started, she said she had "unbearable" pain and her leg had become so swollen that it was hard for her to walk.

Bryant went to an urgent care clinic and was prescribed antibiotics, but her condition got worse. When the family returned home days after Bryant first had symptoms, she noticed a rash had formed, was creeping up her calf, and had exploded in blisters. At this point, the pain was "worse than labor," Bryant said.

She went to the hospital, where she was diagnosed with cellulitis, a common bacterial infection that can become life-threatening if it's not treated. More specifically, Bryant developed what's commonly known as "hot tub rash," which is caused by an infection with a germ called *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.

Bryant said she was given a 10-day course of stronger antibiotics, but those also didn't clear up her infection. She was eventually referred to an infectious disease specialist and hospitalized for four days. "I thought I was going to lose my leg," Bryant said. "They told me they couldn't make any promises... and even if things went well, I might need skin grafts."

Bryant's skin had started cracking and blackening at this point. "It didn't feel like it was part of me," she said. "To see all the pus and the color changes was creepy." She was given a two-week course of IV antibiotics, which finally worked. "I hugged [the doctor]," she said, of getting the news that her health was improving. "I just squeezed her. The whole time I was in the hospital, I was wondering, 'Will I ever get better?'"

Bryant told RTV6 that her doctor told her she got the infection from the hotel's hot tub. "Every night, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, we were in the hot tub and [the doctor] was like, 'That's the only way I thought you could get this infection was from a hot tub,'" she said.

Bryant now wears compression stockings daily to reduce swelling in her leg. She says she feels "different" sensations in her right calf, but is just happy she's okay. "At first, I was thankful to have my leg," she said. "But more so, [I'm] thankful to be alive. I feel like I need to warn other people."

Bryant said that her experience "changed my view on hot tubs. I used to think they were nice and relaxing. Now I know how nasty they can be so fast. I will not be going back in one."

What is hot tub rash, exactly?

Hot tub rash is a skin infection that can impact people of all ages, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* is common in the environment, the CDC says, and a person can develop tub rash if contaminated water comes in contact with their skin for a long period of time.

Pseudomonas aeruginosa “loves to live in water,” says **Gary Goldenberg, MD**, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital, adding that “if the tub or water is dirty, it’s possible for bacteria to enter the skin.” (Soaking in water can also create small cracks in the skin that the bacteria can enter through, he says.)

Once infected, a person can experience symptoms like redness, pain, and warmth, says infectious disease expert Amesh A. Adalja, MD, senior scholar at the John’s Hopkins Center for Health Security. “It’s usually on one part of the body,” he says, like a person’s leg or arm.

The infection can spread, causing a fever and chills, Dr. Goldenberg says, and can even progress to sepsis, a life-threatening complication of an infection.

How is hot tub rash treated?

If it’s caught early, it’s usually treated with antibiotics, Dr. Adalja says. But, if it’s progressed or the infection is aggressive, a patient might need IV antibiotics, he says.

Most of these rashes clear up within a few days after someone contracts them, the CDC says. But if it spreads, it can become much more serious.

How can you prevent hot tub rash?

If you’re using a public hot tub or pool, the CDC recommends asking the person in charge if disinfectant (like chlorine) pH levels are checked at least twice a day, given that hot tubs and pools with good pH control are less likely to contain the bacteria that will lead to hot tub rash.

You can even use your own pool test strips to check the pool or hot tub yourself for adequate disinfectant (chlorine or bromine) levels. The CDC recommends the following levels:

- Pools: free chlorine (1–3 parts per million or ppm)
- Hot Tubs: free chlorine (2–4 ppm) or bromine (4–6 ppm)
- Both hot tubs and pools should have a pH level of 7.2–7.8

If the levels are off, tell the person in charge ASAP. And if you think you’ve developed hot tub rash, see a doctor immediately. “You want to treat this sooner rather than later before this gets worse or spreads,” Dr. Adalja says.



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