Alice,

I have heard that boils can be caused by a mineral or vitamin deficiency. Is this true? Secondly, I have had a boil for approximately six years. It will go away for a few months but soon return. I’ve tried a variety of drawing salves and these seem to help, but only temporarily. What should I do?

?Plagued

Answer

Dear Plagued,

Even biblical texts make reference to the plague of boils! A boil is an inflamed, pus-filled area of the skin usually caused by a bacterial infection. Boils commonly appear as infected hair follicles, and are usually found on the back of the neck and in the armpit, groin, and other moist areas. No direct connection exists between mineral or vitamin deficiency and the etiology of boils; however, having an adequate supply of vitamins and minerals does keep your vital body functions in good working order, promoting a stronger immune system to fight bacterial infections.

A boil appears initially as a red, painful lump which eventually swells, fills with pus, and has a yellowish tip. Boils may recur in people with limited resistance to bacterial infection or in people with diabetes.

To treat your boil, try applying hot compresses on the affected area to reduce discomfort, encourage draining, and promote healing. Thoroughly washing your hands and laundering any towels or clothing that come in contact with the drained boil(s) is also recommended. If the boil is large or painful, a health care provider may prescribe an antibiotic or may open up the boil with a sterile needle to drain the pus from the site. Squeezing or bursting a boil on your own may cause the infection to spread or make it worse. It might be best to check with your health care provider about the boil and see which manner of treatment s/he recommends especially since you mention that this is a recurring dilemma. Taking care of those boils will help prevent them from reaching biblical proportions!

Alice!

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