

# Fish Tank Granuloma

## Occupational Skin Infection from Handling Fish

### What is Fish Tank Granuloma (FTG)?

A rare skin infection caused by *Mycobacterium marinum*, a non-tuberculosis mycobacterium. The organism is found worldwide in stagnant freshwater and saltwater environments including lakes, inadequately chlorinated swimming pools, and aquariums, including laboratory aquariums.

### How does infection occur?

Infection occurs when water containing *M. marinum* enters through a break in the skin. A thorough history from infected individuals usually reveals an injury associated with cleaning fish tanks, changing aquarium water, or trauma from fishhooks. The skin infection is not spread from person to person.

### What are the symptoms?

Fish tank granuloma presents as a slow growing, inflamed red bump (nodule or plaque) at the trauma site. The lesion is often painful and may become ulcerated or crusted. Skin changes usually appear about two to four weeks after the aquatic exposure. The most common location for infection is the back of the dominant hand.

### How do I prevent it?

Use of proper PPE, such as disposable gloves, will help prevent contamination of skin surfaces. Thorough hand washing is very important to further reduce potential for infection.

### How is it treated?

FTG responds to antibiotics, but treatment may need to be prolonged.

### Learn more:

<https://www.aaalac.org/pub/?id=DCA7747C-FBCC-D8B2-F93C-F9249E530DCA>

<https://www.aocd.org/page/FishTankGranuloma>

<https://www.fda.gov/media/80637/download>

[http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/mycobacterium\\_marinum.pdf](http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/mycobacterium_marinum.pdf)

