

Flesheaters and Bloodsuckers

1 *The Place: A large city hospital
The Scene: A patient's room*

The patient lies in bed, watching, with her eyes wide open. Her stomach is turning. She can't look any longer; it's making her sick.

The nurse carefully places live maggots into the hole in her foot. Yes, live maggots! It's

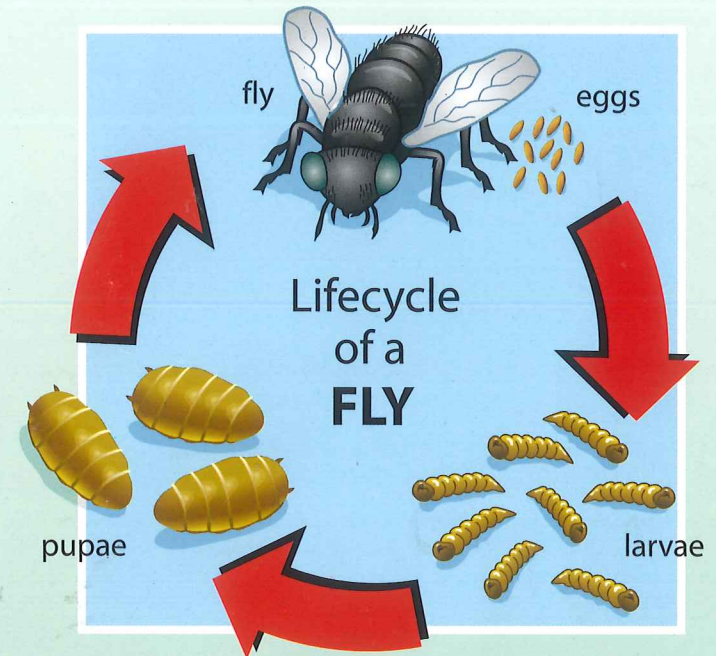
bad enough having a rotting hole in your foot that won't heal but ... maggots? The doctors believe this is the only way they can save her foot. The nurse wraps bandages over the wound, covering the maggots.

2 Believe it or not, this treatment is used in many hospitals. It is called Maggot Therapy or MDT.

When most people think of maggots they think of food that has gone bad. This is because we usually find maggots in "off" meat. They like to feed on rotting flesh!

Maggots can be very useful little grubs. They eat the dead skin and kill many of the nasty bugs that infect open wounds. You could say this makes them "mini doctors". They use their tiny mouth hooks to grab up the dead flesh.

3 The maggot hatches from a fly's egg. It is the second stage in the life cycle of the fly. It grows in this order:
egg → larva (maggot) → pupa → adult (fly).



Doctors don't use just any type of maggot. The most common one they use is the blowfly maggot — the really noisy one. A female blowfly lays between 200 and 300 eggs at a time. The maggot is only about two millimetres long when it hatches. This is the best size to work with

for the doctors. The maggot may stay in the wound, cleaning it, for up to six days. By this time it will have grown to ten millimetres.

4 While the maggot is on the wound it eats the dead flesh. It doesn't hurt the healthy flesh. The maggot also makes a special juice that kills any infection that grows in the wound. They have been known to heal wounds that even medicine could not fix.

People have known about these helpful little grubs for hundreds of years. Old records show that wounded soldiers treated with maggots got better faster than those without maggots. It seems we have used these "mini doctors" for a long time.

5 We have also known about leeches, the clever little bloodsuckers, for a long time. Thousands of years, in fact. The Egyptians used them when people weren't well. They hoped the leeches would suck the person's sickness out when they sucked the blood out. Leeches were used in this way for many years. It was called bloodletting.

Today doctors still use leeches. They are used after an operation to reattach a finger, toe or limb that has been cut off in an accident. The leech can help the blood to flow again. This stops the rejoined flesh from dying.

6 Leeches look like shiny, black-grey worms. These amazing little suckers have three jaws, not two, with almost 100 teeth. They use these teeth to grab onto the flesh so they can suck the blood out. It doesn't hurt you when they bite because they have their own special painkiller. They also squirt a special juice to

make the wound bleed. This is what keeps the blood flowing and the flesh alive.

So, what do you think about these little flesh-eating or bloodsucking grubs now? Little lifesavers? Yes, but I'm sure you don't want to see them in action.

A damaged toe has been reattached by a team of special doctors

Leeches have been used to:

- improve the blood flow
- lessen the chance of dangerous clotting
- reduce swelling



Questions

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 Maggot Therapy is sometimes called</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a MTD. b MDT. c DMT. <p>2 The maggot stage comes after the</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a egg. b pupa. c adult. <p>3 Maggots often work in the wound for</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a two days. b six days. c ten days. | <p>4 Who have been using leeches for thousands of years?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a soldiers b Egyptians c hospital patients <p>5 Leeches can be used</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a to kill infection. b to help blood flow. c as a general painkiller. <p>6 Leeches are most likely to be used after a</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a brain operation. b car accident. c visit to the dentist. |
|---|---|

Vocabulary

Match the words from the text to the clues.
The brackets show the text sections ().

therapy reattach
squirt wound patient

- 7 A person who is unwell in hospital (1)
- 8 Medical care given to make you well (2)
- 9 An injured or hurt area on your body (4)
- 10 A word meaning to rejoin (5)
- 11 To shoot or spurt liquid (6)

Grammar

Find a **verb** (an action word) in these sentences.

- 12 The patient lies in bed.
- 13 The maggot hatches from a fly's egg.
- 14 By this time it's grown to ten millimetres.
- 15 The blood flows continuously.

Back To The Text...

- 16 The pupa is the first stage in the fly's life cycle.
 - a true
 - b false
- 17 Blowfly maggots are preferred for MDT.
 - a true
 - b false
- 18 Leeches have a third jaw.
 - a true
 - b false

Think About This

- 19 Where is the MDT patient?
 - a In an ambulance.
 - b In a doctor's rooms.
 - c In a city hospital.

What would happen first in a leech treatment?
Choose **a** or **b**.

- 20
 - a The finger is rejoined.
 - b The leech is applied.
- 21 What do you think "off meat" means?
 - a A special meat off-cut.
 - b Meat fresh from the butcher.
 - c The meat is starting to go bad.
- 22 If an ancient Queen like Cleopatra had become unwell she may have asked for which of the following treatments?
 - a MDT
 - b leeches
 - c antibiotics
- 23 The writer thinks that these treatments
 - a are difficult to watch.
 - b are rarely successful.
 - c should only be used on adults.

Challenge Option

Drawing: Draw a picture of a hospital operating room.

