

# Acne bug could be the cause of your infections

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A bacterium which causes acne and is commonly found on the skin, is now known to cause infections all over the body. Propionibacterium acnes (*P. acnes*) has been associated with infections of artificial joints and heart valves (endocarditis), as well as eye infections and chest infections -- which are common at this time of year.

Previously, researchers thought the detection of *P. acnes* at the site of these infections was due to contamination from the skin. For example, an infection at a site within the body after surgery, could have been caused by bacteria transferred to an open wound from the skin during an operation. But recent research has contradicted this, suggesting *P. acnes* already within the body, may be the cause. Although it is often disregarded as a harmless bystander when found in blood and tissue swabs taken from patients, we should not rule out this bug in the diagnosis of disease.

People who are wrongly diagnosed may go on to develop complications of their infection if the wrong bug is the target for treatment. So it is vital that infection with *P.acnes* is not ignored, and that the public are made aware of this overlooked bug.

Professor Peter Lambert, expert in *P.acnes* infection from Aston University said: "it is important to recognise that this organism has the ability to grow slowly inside our body cells as well as on the surface of medical devices in the body. It has long been associated with common acne, where it contributes to the [inflammation](#) and pain. Recent studies

show that it might also be involved in other important conditions such as [prostate cancer](#)".

**More information:** On 12 January 2011, 10.30am Professor Peter Lambert will present the Denver Russell Memorial lecture at the Society for Applied Microbiology Winter Meeting 2011: "Propionibacterium acnes: an emerging pathogen".

Provided by Wiley

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