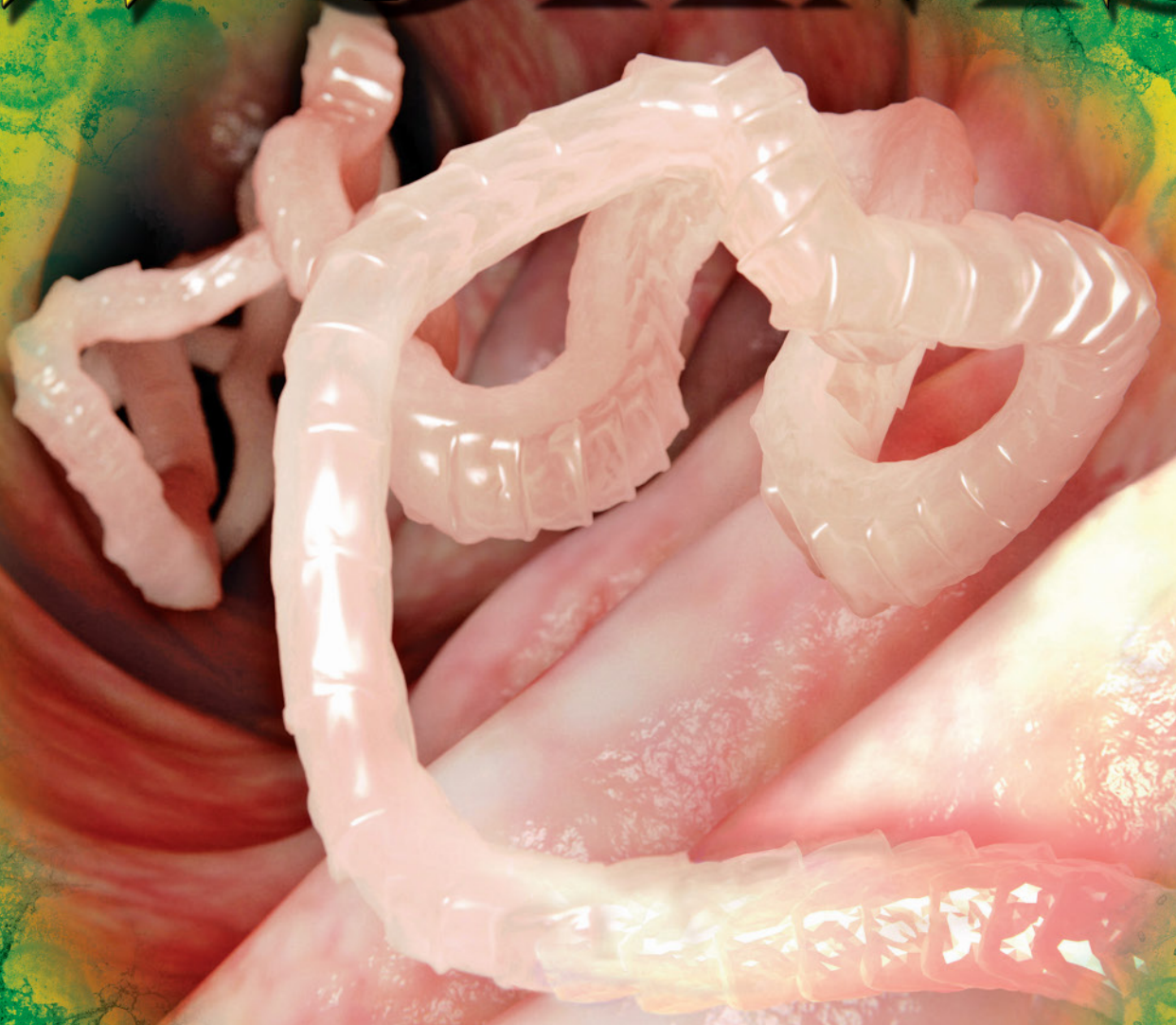


 **BUGGED OUT!**   
The World's Most Dangerous Bugs

# WRETCHED WORMS



by Kevin Blake

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by **Kevin Blake**

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# A Walking Nightmare

In January of 2018, Eddie Zytner and his girlfriend, Katie Stephens, walked together across a sandy beach in the Dominican Republic. Soon, however, they both experienced an itchy feeling on their feet. Each day, the itching became more **intense**. “We were scratching our toes for almost the **duration** of the trip,” remembered Eddie.

The Dominican Republic is a small country on the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean Sea.

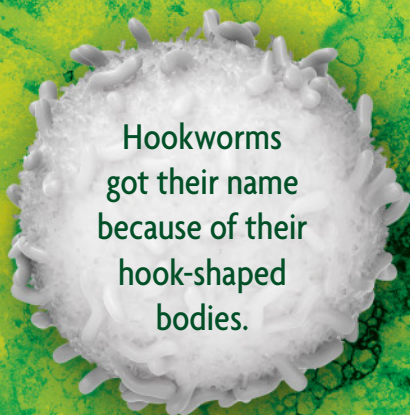




When the couple arrived home from their vacation, things only got worse. Their feet swelled and red blisters popped up on their skin. The pain became unbearable. Soon, Eddie and Katie couldn't walk without crutches. They went to a doctor, who made a startling discovery. He found dozens of small **parasites** called hookworms crawling through Eddie's and Katie's flesh!



A young hookworm seen under a microscope



Hookworms got their name because of their hook-shaped bodies.

A foot infested with hookworms



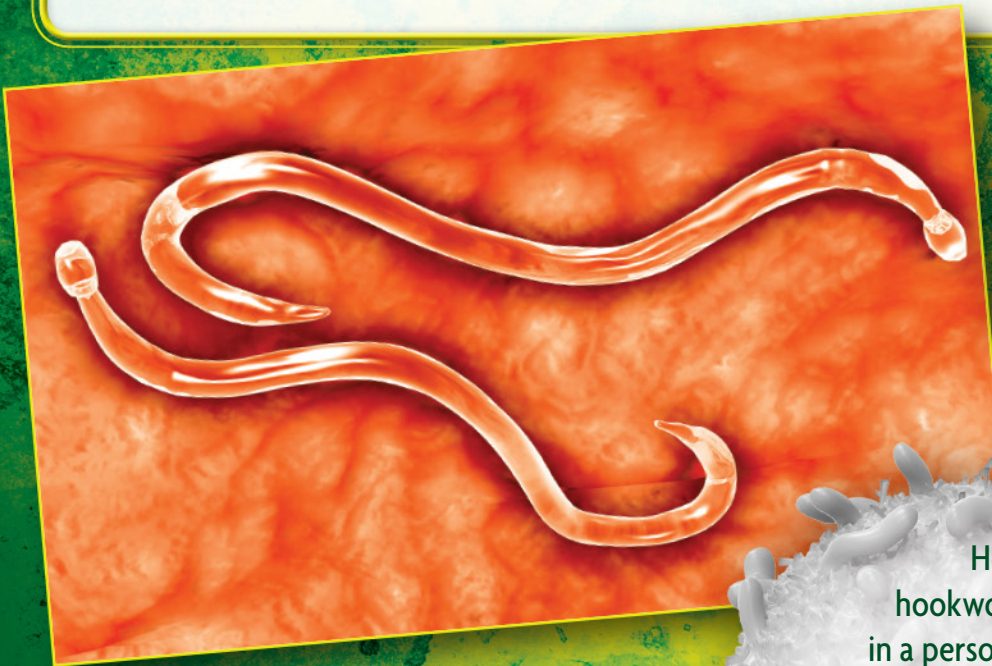


# Hookworm Life

How did the hookworms get inside Eddie's and Katie's feet?

Hookworms are tiny parasites that live inside some people's **intestines**.

In the body, they feed on blood and other fluids. Well-fed female hookworms can lay up to 30,000 eggs each day. When an **infected** person defecates, or poops, the eggs pass through the body and are released into the **environment**. The hookworm eggs then hatch into **larvae**. If a person with bare feet walks nearby, the tiny larvae can burrow into their skin, which is what happened to Eddie and Katie.



Hookworms can survive in people's intestines for five years or more. Over time, the infection can lead to upset stomach, loss of appetite, and fatigue.



A hookworm egg

How do hookworms end up in a person's intestines? After hookworm larvae enter the skin, they travel through a person's blood to the lungs. Once in the lungs, they move to the **trachea** and are then coughed up, swallowed, and eventually passed into the intestines!



Luckily, Eddie and Katie were given medicine that killed the hookworms. “We’ve been off crutches for a couple of days now. We can finally put some pressure on our feet,” Eddie reported. He advises travelers to be careful. If a beach or any other area looks or smells dirty, “wear shoes!” Eddie advised.

**Hookworm larvae thrive in warm, moist soil or sand. It’s best to wear shoes in these areas.**