

## Letter to the Editor

### Shiitake Mushroom Dermatitis in a Returning Traveler

Dear Editor,

We agree with the editorial by Philip J. Rosenthal “Be Careful What You Eat!”<sup>1</sup> and wish to highlight other foodstuffs which can have a deleterious impact on the health of returning travelers.

A 30-year-old woman attended our emergency clinic with a 2-day history of a widespread burning and pruritic rash following a trip to Hong Kong, where she had sustained multiple arthropod bites on the lower limbs. She had a history of well-controlled atopic dermatitis and, although she had witnessed the current public disorder, had had no direct contact with tear gas.

On examination, she was afebrile. There was a linear, erythematous, and slightly raised eruption on the torso and limbs (Figure 1), suggestive of scratch marks, with erythematous papules on the hands, legs, and feet. The face was spared. There was a patch of atopic dermatitis in each antecubital fossa, but no dermographism. There was no peripheral



FIGURE 1. Flagellate dermatitis due to shiitake mushroom dermatitis. This figure appears in color at [www.ajtmh.org](http://www.ajtmh.org).

eosinophilia, C-reactive protein was normal, and HIV, syphilis, and antistreptolysin O serologies were negative.

The appearance of the rash caused us to take a detailed dietary history. She was a vegan and had eaten four skewers of shiitake mushrooms purchased from a street vendor approximately 48 hours before the onset of her symptoms. A diagnosis of shiitake mushroom dermatitis was made, and she was treated with oral prednisolone, 30 mg daily for 5 days, with complete resolution of her symptoms.

A flagellate rash following the recent ingestion of shiitake mushrooms (*Lentinus edodes*) is diagnostic.<sup>2</sup> The dermatitis is a toxic reaction to a thermolabile polysaccharide, lentinan, which is present in raw and undercooked shiitake mushrooms.<sup>2</sup> The rash can appear from two hours to five days following ingestion and may take up to 28 days to resolve.<sup>2</sup> Severe cutaneous reactions have been reported.<sup>3</sup>

This case highlights the importance of a thorough dietary history in returning travelers with unexplained symptoms and that being “careful what you eat” is not restricted to raw or undercooked animal products.

HENRIETTA MILLS  
*Hospital for Tropical Diseases*  
*University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust*  
*London, United Kingdom*  
*E-mail: henriettamills@gmail.com*

STEPHEN L. WALKER  
*Hospital for Tropical Diseases and Department of Dermatology*  
*University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust*  
*London, United Kingdom*  
*Faculty of Infectious and Tropical Diseases*  
*London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine*  
*London, United Kingdom*  
*E-mail: steve.walker@lshtm.ac.uk*

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#### REFERENCES

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3. Hamer SE, Kulkarni K, Cohen SN, 2015. Shiitake dermatitis with oral ulceration and pustules. *Clin Exp Dermatol* 40: 332–333.