

## The Pork tapeworm larvae

### **Mother-of-four 'two weeks from death' has emergency surgery after her brain becomes riddled with tapeworm larvae**

- **Miss Taylor contracted a parasitic disease of the nervous system in 2009**
- **The mother-of-four is fighting to get a new home after her neurologist said climbing stairs to her council flat is endangering her health**

By Claire Bates, Daily Mail On line

Suki-Jane Taylor, 42, contracted neurocysticercosis in 2009, a parasitic disease of the nervous system, after she was infected by pork tapeworm eggs.

The eggs are spread through food, water, or surfaces that have been contaminated with faeces.

The tapeworm larvae travelled to her brain where they formed cysts. When they started to die they caused an aneurysm the size of a tangerine in Miss Taylor's brain.





Miss Suki Taylor (right) had major brain surgery to treat a brain aneurysm that was most probably caused by tapeworm larvae

She was rushed to St George's Hospital, in south London, where an MRI revealed the dangerously swollen blood vessel.

Surgeons were quick to operate, inserting a shunt in her skull to drain away a build up of fluid. She suffered a loss of taste and smell as a result of the rare condition and now suffers from epilepsy and depression.

Miss Taylor said: 'If it hadn't been for my partner's insistence that they keep me in at St George's and I see a specialist and had an MRI scan they wouldn't have found the aneurysm.'

'They removed it straight away and when I was coming around he was talking to my partner and he said I was two weeks away from death. It was right at the top of my spine at the back of my brain.'

Neurocysticercosis is very rare in developed countries causing just 24 cases a year in the UK and 1,500 cases in the U.S.



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Infected: **The pork tapeworm larvae** forms inside cysts (sacs) and can cause tissue inflammation when they die

It is contracted by ingesting eggs excreted by a person who has an intestinal tapeworm. People living in the same household with a tapeworm carrier have a much higher risk of getting cysticercosis than others. It is only spread along a faecal to oral route.

Once ingested, the larvae embed in tissues including the brain, forming cysticerci (cyst sacs). These can cause seizures and headaches. However, confusion, lack of attention to people and surroundings, difficulty with balance and excess fluid around the brain (called hydrocephalus) can also occur. If left untreated the disease can result in death.

Symptoms can occur months to years after infection, usually when the cysts are in the process of dying, so it's almost impossible for a patient to know when they picked it up.

When the parasites die the brain tissue around the cyst can swell. The pressure caused by swelling is what causes most of the symptoms.

Infections are generally treated with anti-parasitic drugs in combination with anti-inflammatory drugs. Surgery is sometimes necessary to treat cysts in certain locations.

Miss Taylor is now fighting another battle - this time to be moved from her third-floor council flat for fear of having an epileptic fit while alone with her children.

Miss Taylor, who has been on the housing list to move since 2001, is currently living in Colliers Wood, south London, with her partner, two-year-old son, 12 year-old-son who has Asperger's syndrome, and 10-year-old daughter.



Miss Taylor, pictured with her children Fred (left), Bertie and Mille, now suffers from epilepsy. Her neurologist said climbing stairs to her council flat is endangering her health

She regularly climbs the three flights of stairs carrying her two-year-old, despite neurologists warning her doing so could cause an epileptic seizure putting herself and her child in danger.

She said: 'My balance has gone, my sense of smell and taste has gone and my eyesight has got worse.

'If I carry too much up and down the stairs I can have an epileptic fit. I can sometimes feel that I have taken the stairs when I haven't.

'My consultant has said if I am moved to a property where I haven't got any steps she could take me off of the epileptic tablets. I'm alive and I'm going to see my children grow up, but I have been left by Wandle Housing Association.

In a letter to Wandle Housing Association, Miss Taylor's consultant neurologist described her accommodation as "unacceptable", calling for her to be moved as a "priority".



A Housing Association spokesman said it recognised the family had been 'dealing with what is clearly a very stressful situation' and they were working hard to find a suitable property for Miss Taylor.



Recovering: Miss Taylor, pictured after surgery, struggles with her balance