You've got mites on your face, and so does everyone else

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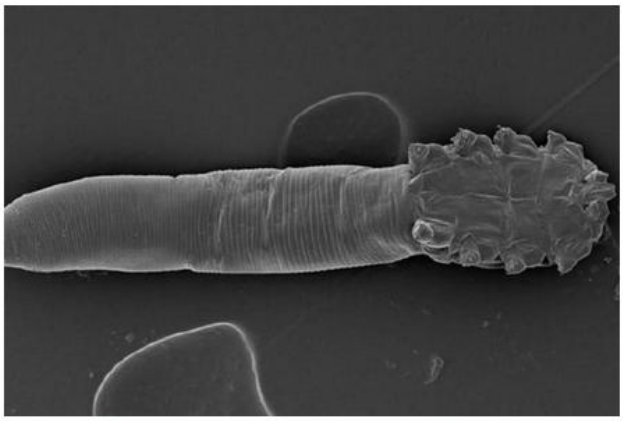
August 28, 2014



Demodex folliculorum is one of two face mite species living on humans. (USDA/Confocal and Electron Microscopy Unit)

RALEIGH, N.C., Aug. 28 (UPI) -- So you've got face mites; big deal, everyone's got them. That's one of several takeaways from a new study by researchers at North Carolina State University.
Face mites are just as they sound: mites that live in and on your face. The animals are members of the arachnid class, relatives of spiders and ticks. Fortunately, unless you investigate the pores of your nose with a microscope, neither you nor anyone else will ever see your face mites. These human-face-frequenting arachnid species are microscopic -- too tiny to pick out with the naked eye.

"The first time I found one on my face I didn't sleep for four nights," Megan Thoemmes, a graduate student at North Carolina State University, told NPR. "They're actually pretty cute. With their eight little legs, they look like they're almost swimming through the oil."

Of course, N.C. State researchers didn't just discover the existence of face mites. They've known they're there for some time. As of yet, the platypus and its egg-laying mammalian relatives are the only warm-blooded animals that scientists have found that don't host these types of microscopic mites.

But considering the fact they're literally staring us in the face, it's surprising how little scientists know about them -- until now. A new study by researchers at N.C. State, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, and the California Academy of Sciences offers some fascinating revelations about the little buggers.

First and foremost: everyone has face mites. Previous skin sampling studies only turned up mites about 20 percent of the time. But actual mites are elusive, and more recent tests looking at mite DNA residue proved that everyone has mites, even if they're sometimes hard to find. Secondly, human faces host two species of mites -- Demodex folliculorum and Demodex brevis -- and, genetically speaking, they aren't that close of relatives.

Perhaps most intriguingly, researchers believe genetic mapping of face mite lineages could offer clues to the movements of ancient human populations. All this and more is detailed in the latest edition of the journal PLOS ONE.

http://www.upi.com/Science_News/2014/08/28/Youve-got-mites-on-your-face-and-so-does-everyone-else/9531409263370/