



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND HEALTH CENTER

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Tinea Versicolor

Tinea versicolor is a common superficial fungal infection of the skin that results in pigment changes. It is most common in young, healthy adults. It is frequently first noticed by patients after sun exposure, when the involved area of skin will not tan. In occasional patients having the patches are darker than the normal skin. The disease is not particularly contagious.

Signs and Symptoms

- Finely scaled, velvety patches on skin that are tan, pink, white, or brown
- Size varies from 4-5mm diameter to larger patches that merge together
- Usually without symptoms, but itching may be present
- Usually seen on trunk, upper arms, neck, face, and groin

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is made by the appearance of the patches, and examining a sample of the scale under a microscope, on a slide that has been prepared with a potassium hydroxide solution.

Treatment

Treatment of tinea versicolor is effective, easy to use, and inexpensive. After treatment, it may take months for the pigment to return to normal, even though the fungus has been eradicated.

- Apply selenium sulfide 2.5% (Selsun Lotion, Excel) to affected areas (may be used on areas from neck to waist) daily and leave on 5-15 minutes for 7 days.
- Then apply one time per week for 4 weeks.
- Repeat this once every three months to prevent recurrences.
- Sulfur-salicylic acid shampoo (Sebulex or Selsun Blue Shampoo) may also be used on a continuing basis to prevent recurrences.
- Newer anti-fungal creams and lotions are also very effective for localized areas, but may be too expensive to use over larger areas.
- Oral antifungal drugs may instead be prescribed by your clinician.
- Without maintenance therapy, 80% of cases will recur within 2 years.

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