



TINEA VERSICOLOR

DEFINITION

Tinea versicolor is a superficial yeast infection that causes a harmless eruption of the skin; it is usually seen on the back, neck, and chest. It can be cleared from the skin with treatment, but tends to recur during hot, humid months in susceptible individuals. It is not considered contagious. We do not know what makes one person more susceptible than another, but the yeast does thrive on humidity (heat and perspiration are initiating factors). The lesions are usually pale, tan, or salmon-colored with slight scale and hardly ever cause symptoms. If you get a sun tan, the skin affected by tinea versicolor will not tan because the sun's rays are blocked by the yeast. On suntanned skin, the rash will appear as light spots. Even with treatment, the light spots will remain until the tan fades, which may take several months. Do not be upset if after treatment, you still seem to have lighter spots on the skin; these will return to normal color in time. There are many safe and effective treatments, but no absolute cure.

TREATMENT

There are multiple methods available for treating tinea versicolor including topical creams, lotions, shampoos, and even pills to take by mouth. The treatment option employed will depend on the severity of your rash. One quick and easy treatment regimen that we often recommend is outlined below:

- Apply Selsun or Exsel lotion to all affected areas and allow to dry
- After 20 minutes, rinse off the lotion and shampoo hair with the same lotion/shampoo in the shower
- Repeat this every day for 3 days, then use every other day for 3 treatments (total of 6 treatments)
- Use once monthly until the skin color has returned to normal
- Apply a topical antifungal cream twice daily in the morning and evening for 21 days; you may start the cream while you are using the lotion

PREVENTION

Because susceptible patients may get tinea versicolor again in the future, it is wise to take a few preventive measures to decrease the chance of recurrence. We recommend using a washcloth with a gentle scrubbing action when bathing. The mechanical action helps to keep the yeast off of the skin. We also recommend that you bathe regularly, especially during hot, humid months with soaps containing salicylic acid, sulfur, or zinc (examples include ZNP bar, Head & Shoulders Shampoo, Selsun Blue Shampoo, Fostex soap, SASTID soap). Lather well and allow the soap to remain on the skin for 1-2 minutes before rinsing off. Repeat use of prescription Selenium sulfide lotion/shampoo monthly during hot summer months, or use routinely once every month if you get frequent recurrences of your rash. Please note that some of these products may be irritating if used too often, causing dry, chapped skin. Do not over use them.

We will refill your prescriptions over the phone for up to one year. Because people with tinea versicolor also get other rashes, it is important to check in yearly with your dermatologist.

