Tinea Versicolor
(Yeast Infection of the Skin)

Tinea versicolor is a common yeast infection of the skin. This condition becomes known when the yeast on our skin starts to overgrow (yeast is a normal inhabitant on our skin). This condition is noticed as white or light brown patches on brown skin, and is more evident in the summer on tanned skin. These areas are slightly scaly if scratched. The light patches from the yeast become evident when the yeast creates “holes in your suntan”. This is most often noticed in the summer. The patches are usually located on the chest, back, pubis, neck and body folds. However, it may occur on any area of body. Mild itching and *inflammation* (redness or soreness) may be present.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis of this is made *clinically* (by looking). Cultures from samples are usually not needed. Examination under the microscope may help. However, yeast is normally found on skin. The diagnosis still remains clinical. Examination under Wood's Ultraviolet Light can determine the extent of the infection.

TREATMENT

This common infection is usually only of *cosmetic* (only a concern to your appearance). It is easily treated with dandruff shampoo such as Selsun Blue used during showers or bathing. Vigorous scrubbing will eliminate the yeast over several days time. The light areas in your skin may remain for weeks or months after the infection is cured unless your skin is exposed to sunlight. The lighter or darker spots caused by the fungus that remain after complete treatment are not a sign of treatment failure; it will take a long time to resolve. Your caregiver may recommend a number of commercial preparations or medication by mouth if home care is not working. Recurrence is common and preventative medication may be necessary.

This skin condition is not highly contagious. Special care is not needed to protect close friends and family members. Normal hygiene is usually enough. Follow up is required only if you develop complications (such as a secondary infection from scratching), if recommended by your caregiver, or if no relief is obtained from the preparations used.

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