

Tinea Versicolor

Overview:

- Tinea Versicolor (T.V.) is a common infection of the skin caused by yeast in the genus *Malassezia* (sp *furfur* or *globosa*). It affects 2–8% of the U.S. population. This yeast can be found as normal flora on the skin of 90–100% of adults, thus **it is not considered contagious**.
- Although T.V. can temporarily discolor your skin, it is not a serious problem; it does not result in permanent skin problems or “internal” problems.
- The yeast that causes T.V. can either cause lightening (more common) or in some cases darkening of the skin, probably through release of azelaic acid. Often more noticeable in the summer months due to sun exposure; affected skin does not tan normally.
- Hot, humid climates can trigger T.V. Also sweating, oral contraceptives, systemic corticosteroids, and malnourishment.
- In the U.S., T.V. is most common in people 15–24 years old; it affects all races and genders equally.
- T.V. generally involves the chest, abdomen, back, shoulders, and upper arms. It rarely affects the face or lower legs.

Treatment:

- Most treatment will resolve the *M. furfur* overgrowth rather quickly, but no matter what treatment is used it often takes months for the discoloration of the skin to resolve.
- People who are susceptible to T.V. often get it repeatedly, generally during the summer. Using a shampoo such as selenium sulfide (Selsun Blue) or Nizoral shampoo 1–2 times per week can reduce the overgrowth of *M. Furfur* on the skin and prevent T.V.

Oral medication:

- A single dose of Fluconazole 400 mg works 80–90% of the time; repeating the dose a week or two later probably increases the likelihood of clearance.
- Fluconazole is secreted in sweat, so it works best if one exercises after taking it and then avoids showering for a few hours.
- Fluconazole can very rarely cause liver toxicity, even with a single dose.

Topical medication:

- Topical ketoconazole (Nizoral) is commonly used and is available as both a cream and a shampoo; a 1% shampoo is available OTC. Clotrimazole (OTC) also works.
- Topical treatment is generally used twice daily for 2–3 weeks, and once or twice weekly as a preventative measure.
- Selenium sulfide (Selsun Blue) can also be used as treatment.
- All topical treatments (including shampoos) should be left on the skin for at least 10 minutes before washing off; overnight application is even better. The creams can be left on all day.