

# TINEA VERSICOLOR



## WHAT IS IT?

Tinea versicolor is a common fungal infection of the skin. The fungus interferes with the normal pigmentation of the skin, resulting in small, discolored patches. These patches may be lighter or darker in color than the surrounding skin and most commonly affect the trunk and shoulders. It is not painful or contagious.

## HOW DID I GET IT?

The fungus that causes tinea versicolor can be found on healthy skin. It only starts causing problems when the fungus overgrows. Several factors may trigger this growth, including: hot, humid weather, oily skin, hormonal changes, weakened immune system.

## TREATMENT OVERVIEW

Products applied to the skin like creams, shampoos, or solutions are effective treatments against the fungus that causes tinea versicolor. But if the rash is severe, covers large areas of your body, returns often, or does not get better with topical treatment, you may need anti-fungal pills. Treatment kills the fungi quickly, but the spots may take months to disappear. Your skin color will also need time to return to normal.

Treatment is usually needed to prevent the rash from spreading and to improve the appearance of your skin. But not everyone chooses to get treatment. If it is not treated, tinea versicolor may linger until you are 50 or 60 years old, when the skin becomes less oily.

In general, creams, shampoos, and solutions are thought to be safer than anti-fungal pills. But topical treatments can be inconvenient, messy, sting or smell bad. For these reasons, people may not complete an entire course of treatment, and the rash may return.

**Anti-fungal pills** are often given because they are easier to use than other products. They may also be more effective at curing the rash than topical products. Healing continues after you have finished all the medicine. But it can take up to six months to know how your skin color will look after it heals.

Tinea versicolor is easily treated. But it often returns within 1 to 2 years. If you tend to get tinea versicolor often, take measures to prevent it from coming back.

- Apply an anti-fungal product to your skin at least once a month. Your dermatologist may recommend using an anti-fungal as often as once a week.
- Take a prescribed anti-fungal pill once a month.

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## TREATMENT CHOICES

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Topical products such as anti-fungal creams, shampoos, or solutions are effective treatments for tinea versicolor. But if the rash is severe, covers large areas of your body, returns often, or does not get better with topical treatment, anti-fungal pills may be prescribed.

How many times each topical product must be applied and how long it is left on varies.

## SHAMPOOS

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Anti-fungal shampoos are usually easier to apply than some anti-fungal creams and may cost less when applied to a large area of skin. Anti-fungal shampoos can be applied to your body as well as to your head.

An anti-fungal shampoo containing selenium sulfide (2.5%) is available by prescription. Over the counter shampoos such as Selsun Blue, Head and Shoulders and Nizoral or prescription Ketoconazole Shampoo should be applied once a day over most of your body from the ears to the knees, including the back. It can be rinsed off after 10 minutes. The shampoo should be used daily for 7 to 14 days or longer.

## OTHER TOPICAL PRODUCTS

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- Anti-fungal creams and foam solutions are available with or without a prescription. These products can be applied to the body or face once or twice a day for two weeks. Examples include:
- Selenium sulfide (such as Selsun Blue), available with or without a prescription in different strengths.
- Ketoconazole (Nizoral), available with a prescription.
- Clotrimazole (such as Lotrimin), available with or without a prescription in different strengths.
- Terbinafine (Lamisil), available with or without a prescription in different strengths.
- Butenafine (Mentax), available with a prescription.
- Naftifine (Naftin), available with a prescription. Naftifine also comes in a gel.
- Ciclopirox olamine (Loprox), available with a prescription as a cream, gel, or lotion.

## ANTI-FUNGAL PILLS

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Anti-fungal pills may be taken in a single dose or once a day for 5 to 10 days to treat tinea versicolor. The medicine in some anti-fungal pills comes to the surface of your skin through sweat. So you'll get the best results if you take an anti-fungal pill, exercise briskly and long enough to sweat, and then wait about 12 hours before you shower. Anti-fungal pills available with a prescription include:

- Ketoconazole (Nizoral)
- Fluconazole (Diflucan)
- Itraconazole (Sporanox)
- Griseofulvin, an anti-fungal used to treat other fungal skin infections, is not used to treat tinea versicolor.