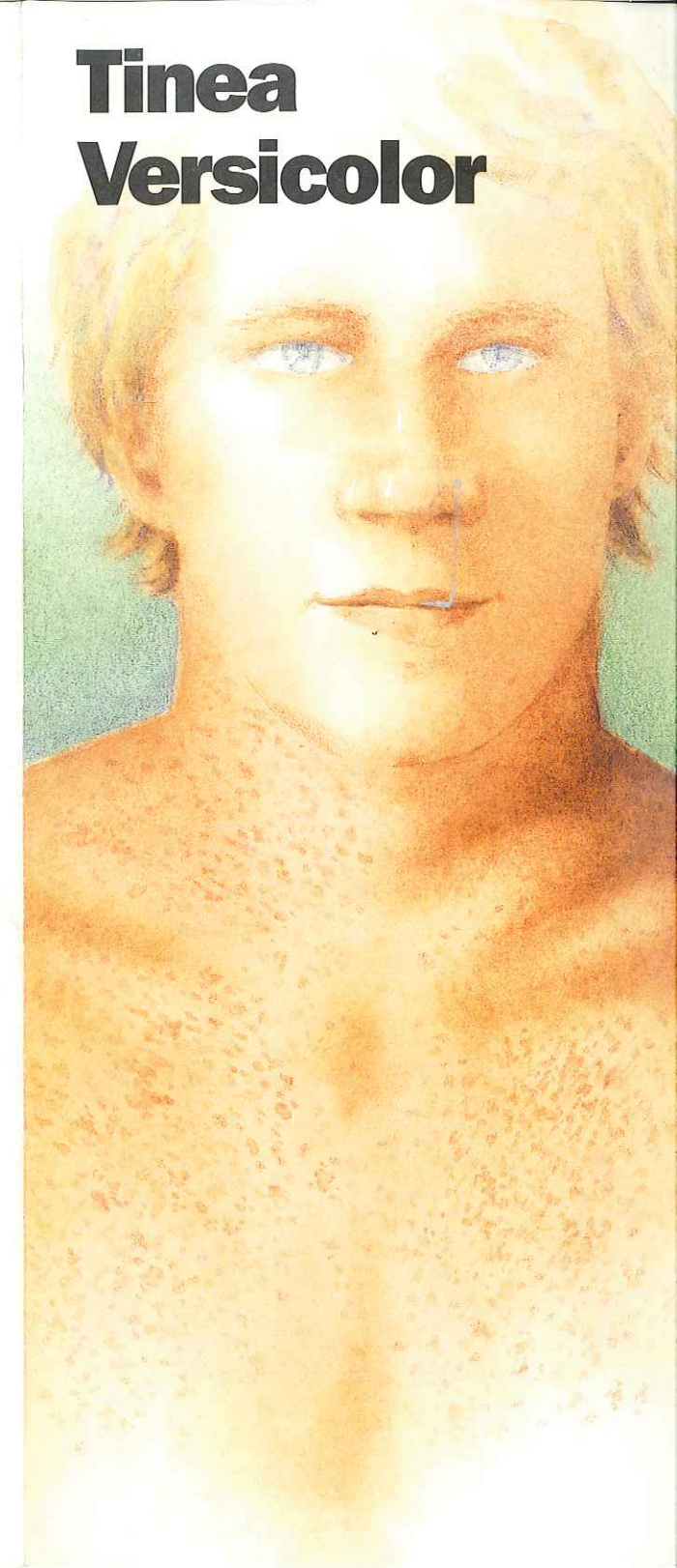


As mentioned earlier, the rash often reappears. To prevent recurrence, special cleansers may have to be used indefinitely.

A medication called *ketoconazole* has been used successfully to treat the fungus in severe cases. Because of certain possible side effects, the use of this prescription medicine must be supervised by your dermatologist.

Each patient is treated by the dermatologist according to the severity of the disease, location of lesions, the climate and the desire of the patient to have healthy-looking skin. It's important to remember that the fungus is easy to kill, but it takes many weeks for the infected areas of the skin to regain their normal color.

Tinea Versicolor



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Tinea versicolor (TIN-e-uh VER-si-color) is an infection of the upper layers of the skin. The major concern of the patient is the uneven skin coloration and scaling, which can be unsightly. The infection is caused by a yeast-like fungus which normally lives on the skin surface in small numbers. It thrives in oily areas of the skin such as the neck, upper chest and back.

What does the infection look like?

How do you recognize it?

The infection looks like small and scaly white-to-tan spots scattered over the upper arms, chest and back. The spots may also appear on the neck and face. On light skin, they may not be visible or they may show up as tan-to-pink spots. The fungal cells grow slowly, in large numbers on the skin and prevent the skin from tanning normally. As the individual's skin tans in the sun, the spots become more noticeable, especially on dark skin. When they occur on areas such as the face and neck, they may be very disturbing to the patient.



Tinea versicolor

What are the symptoms of the infection?

The infection usually produces few, if any, symptoms. Occasionally, a patient will experience some slight itching. Itching may be more intense when the patient is very hot.

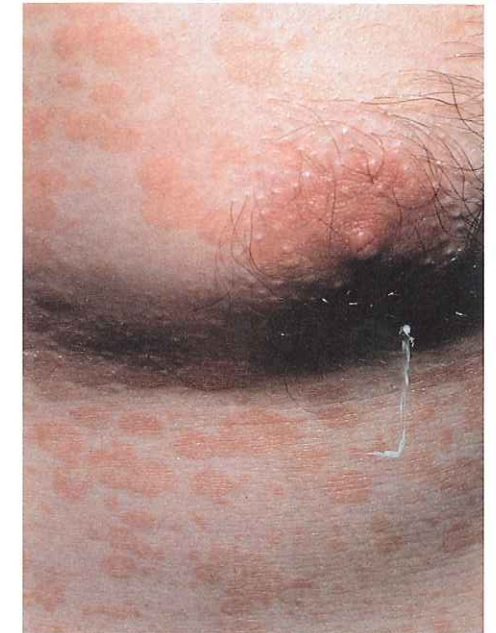
Who may become infected?

The great majority of patients who develop the infection are teenagers or young adults. The infection is very rare in the elderly and in children, except in tropical climates where it can affect anyone of any age. Both dark and light skinned people seem to be equally susceptible. Persons with oily skin may be more susceptible than those with naturally dry skin.

Why do some people have the infection and others do not?

The reasons why some individuals have the infection and others do not are not clearly understood. Since the fungus is normally present in small numbers on everyone's skin, anyone can develop the infection. The yeast-like fungus normally grows slowly in the skin. Normal washing and cleansing usually removes the fungal cells along with dead skin. During the summer months when the temperature and humidity are high, the cells increase. The fungus then grows and forms small "colonies" on the surface of the skin. These colonies affect the normal pigmentation process, resulting in the light or dark colored spots.

In some tropical countries where heat and high humidity are continuous, people have these spots year 'round. In other climates, the infection generally disappears in the cooler and drier months of the year.



Tinea versicolor

How is this infection diagnosed?

The light or dark colored spots may resemble other skin conditions. This infection can be easily recognized by a dermatologist. In most cases, the signs and symptoms and a simple examination of the fine scales scraped from the lesions will indicate the diagnosis. The patient's lesions are lightly scraped with a sterile blade onto a slide and examined under a microscope. This can confirm the presence of the fungus.

How is this fungal infection treated?

The infection is easily treated with either topical or oral medications. Topical creams and ointments are applied directly to the skin, either once or twice a day. The uneven color of the skin may remain several months after the fungus has been eliminated.