

Pityriasis Versicolor

Pityriasis versicolor is a very common, harmless, non-contagious infection, caused by fungi called *Malassezia spp.*

It produces a lot of small, non-itchy spots on the skin. These spots may join together to make larger spots.

The name versicolor (“multi-colored”) refers to the different colors that it takes on (brown, yellow, white or red). The spots also turn lighter when the patient is tanned.

The areas most commonly affected are the back, shoulders and upper chest, although it can also affect the neck, arms, skin under the breasts, armpits, groin and abdomen. It rarely affects the face.

Who can it affect? It can appear at any age, but it is more common during adolescence (because the skin is greasier). It affects men and women equally.

What brings it on? Greasy skin, the heat, humidity, excessive sweating, states of malnutrition, using oils and cosmetics on the skin, taking oral contraceptives and wearing tight clothing. It is more frequent in warm climates and almost always appears in summer.

How is it treated? By regularly treating the affected areas and the scalp, with a shampoo containing selenium sulfide for a week or ketoconazole gel for 2 to 4 weeks, applied on to dry skin. Leave it to act for 10-15 minutes and then rinse thoroughly in the shower every day.



As a **follow-up** one application per week is advisable for at least 2 months.

Very few cases do not respond to this treatment, but if that should happen your doctor will probably prescribe oral treatment.

It often appears not to have gone away because the changes in skin color may last for several months, even though the infection has gone. You will have to wait for the spots to disappear.

Advice to prevent it and to stop it coming back

- Keep your skin clean and dry.
- Avoid tight, synthetic clothing in summer.
- Avoid using oily products on the skin.
- Wash your clothes and towels in hot water (to get rid of the fungus).
- Repeat the treatment once a week for at least 2 months.

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