

Mycosis Fungoides

Also known as T-cell lymphoma

What is mycosis fungoides?

Mycosis fungoides is a rare skin condition caused by the presence of abnormal white blood cells within the skin. Most cases of mycosis fungoides are not life-threatening and can be treated but not cured.

What causes mycosis fungoides?

No one knows precisely what causes mycosis fungoides, however it is more common in middle age. It is not contagious or inherited.

What does mycosis fungoides look like?

Mycosis fungoides typically presents as red, scaly patches on the skin around the abdomen and buttocks in a so called “bathing suit” distribution. These areas are often itchy but not usually painful. More advanced lesions can be thick or raised and can be accompanied by the development of lumps or widespread redness.

How is mycosis fungoides diagnosed?

Obtaining a skin biopsy is usually necessary to reach a diagnosis of mycosis fungoides. Because the changes in early mycosis fungoides can be subtle, several biopsies over time may be needed to establish a diagnosis. Sometimes other tests such as blood tests, X-rays, CT scans or PET scans can also be helpful.

How is mycosis fungoides treated?

The treatment of mycosis fungoides depends on the area of skin affected and the stage of disease.

Treatment options include:

- Corticosteroid ointments
- Topic nitrogen mustard
- Narrow-band UVB phototherapy
- PUVA phototherapy
- Radiotherapy
- Methotrexate
- Acitretin
- Interferon
- Extracorporeal photophoresis
- Chemotherapy
- Allogeneic stem cell transplantation.

What is the likely outcome of mycosis fungoides?

Mycosis fungoides is considered a low-grade skin malignancy which cannot be cured but is usually treatable. Prognosis depends on the stage of the condition. For people with early stage mycosis fungoides, the impact of disease on overall survival is minimal. As the disease advances the impact on survival becomes of greater concern.