

Fungal Infections of the Skin and its Resistance – A Rising Menace

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- Dr Thansiha -

Skin is the one of the most abused organ of our body. The appearance of small rash is just taken lightly and usually treated by over the counter medications by patients from pharmacies or by home remedies. Though every skin disease is not life threatening , appropriate treatment from a dermatologist ensures better quality of life in terms of disease control and itching.

How does fungal infection of the skin present?

Fungal infection of the skin is commonly referred to as ringworm. Skin fungal infection is not a major disease but its inappropriate treatment makes it a major one as it affects your daily life. People suffering from these infections have extreme itching mostly at night and have red colour patches in covered areas of the body especially groin. It can also present as changes in the nail colour or even as patch of hair loss.

Why are fungal infections of the skin on a rise?

In the recent years, dermatologists have been facing an alarming issue in their clinical practice due to an increase in the fungal infections of the skin. It usually starts with one family member and then progresses to involve other family members due to close contact, bad personal hygiene and inappropriate use of over the counter medications. It can spread from one person to other either by direct contact with infected person / by sharing of objects of daily use. The over the counter medications which give an initial relief are usually a combination of drugs that include topical steroids that inadvertently harm the skin. The rampant usage of topical steroids has increased the spread of the disease and has made it an epidemic.

What is fungal resistance?

Inadequate usage of antifungal medications (creams/ tablets) in terms of dosage or duration can lead to development of resistance to drugs. Skin fungal infections usually need at least one- two months of treatment. Most patients stop the drug abruptly once the disease comes down or do not want to take treatment for the prescribed time. When the drug is stopped abruptly and not taken according to the recommended course, the infection comes back within no time. The recurrence of infections usually needs to be treated with a higher dosage or longer duration of antifungal. Sometimes disease is so resistant that even 6 months of treatment is insufficient to eradicate the fungus from the body. The various factors that can contribute to recurrences include inadequate treatment, improper adherence to treatment, improper or inadequate treatment of close contacts or family members, resistance to antifungal drugs, use of topical steroid antifungals and self-medication.

What is the need of the hour with respect to fungal infections of the skin?

Avoid self-medication. It is not advisable to buy medicines/ creams over the counter / as advised by the family members / neighbor

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