



**University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Abrons Student Health Center**

## **INSTRUCTION SHEET: TINEA VERSICOLOR**

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed tinea versicolor. Tinea versicolor is a harmless skin infection caused by microscopic fungi. The infection causes flat, pale, roundish spots on the chest, back, neck, or upper arms.

Tinea versicolor is caused by a fungus that lives on normal skin. For unknown reasons, some people are affected more than others by the fungus. In the US, tinea versicolor most often affects persons 15 to 24 years old.

Tinea versicolor occurs more often in hot, humid climates. On untanned skin, the spots appear pink to coppery-tan in color. On tanned skin, the spots show up as pale, whitish patches. Since tanning does not occur in the affected patches of skin, the spots often become more noticeable during the summer months.

Tinea versicolor is not felt to be contagious, since the fungus is a normal skin inhabitant in 90 to 100% of adults.

Treatment of tinea versicolor begins with the application of topical (rub-on) medicines. These medicines are very safe, with a low incidence of side effects.

In stubborn cases of tinea versicolor, or for convenience, a health care provider can prescribe anti-fungal medicines that are taken by mouth. The medicines used by mouth have more potential for adverse side effects, so topical creams and powders are most often used first.

Recurrence of tinea versicolor is common, so prophylactic (preventive) treatment is often continued after the initial treatment is accomplished.

Changes in skin color from tinea versicolor infection are temporary, not permanent.

### **MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT TINEA VERSICOLOR:**

1. Typically, a prescription or over-the-counter form of selenium sulfide cream is applied at bedtime to the affected areas. The medicine is left on ten to twenty minutes, then washed off in the shower. The medicine is applied daily for a week, then once a week for one to two months, then once a month.
2. Applications once every two to three months can be used to prevent recurrences.
3. If the areas do not improve after several weeks of treatment, return to the Student Health Center or schedule a follow-up appointment with your personal/referral provider for re-evaluation.