

HIV & Skin

There are a number of skin conditions that tend to start, spread or worsen when the immune system is weakened. While most people affected by these conditions are otherwise healthy, sometimes, particularly when the skin problem is more severe or difficult to treat than usual, there might be more to it. The following conditions may start, spread or worsen when the immune system is weakened:

Seborrheic Dermatitis: a red, flaky eruption especially on the face & scalp.

Psoriasis: very scaly areas of red skin anywhere on the body.

Molluscum Contagiosa: tiny warty shiny bumps with a central cheesy core.

Warts: rough, flesh-colored bumps.

Yeast Infection: white patches in the mouth or itchy vaginal infections.

Folliculitis Infections: itchy pimples on the chest or above with pustules.

Herpes Simplex: fever blisters or cold sores that do not heal in one month.

Shingles (Herpes Zoster): a band of painful blisters on one part of the body.

Fungus Infections of nails/skin: scaly areas on the skin.

Pruritus of unknown etiology: Widespread itch without definitive rash

Unusual infection: an infection by a germ that doesn't normally cause disease.

You may have one of the above conditions but no definite sign of a problem with your immune system. If there is any question your immune system should be evaluated. The immune system can be suppressed by stress, prescription and illegal drugs, advanced age, alcoholism, malnutrition, HIV infection/ AIDS, and cancers such as Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Your exam will evaluate you for the above conditions, but we need your specific consent to evaluate you for the presence of antibodies to HIV (the virus associated with AIDS).

Many public health organizations have recommended that before submitting to an HIV test, a person seek counseling to become informed concerning the implications of such a test. A person may remain free of symptoms for years after becoming infected.

HIV testing is highly accurate, but it is not error free. Error happens most commonly in recently infected persons; it takes at least 4-12 weeks for a positive test result to develop after a person is infected). Re-testing should always be done to confirm a positive test.

If you are at risk, be sure to seek appropriate testing. HIV infected individuals may have complex skin problems.