

Mucormycosis

Mucormycosis is a serious but rare fungal infection, caused by the 'mucormycetes' group of fungi. It has been incorrectly called 'Black Fungus' recently, but the fungi causing mucormycosis are of a variety of colours.

1 Who is at risk

In most people, the fungi do not cause harm. There is a greater risk of infection in people:



With diabetes.



With cancer.



With HIV/AIDS.



Who have had treatment with higher doses or longer courses of steroids.



Who have weak immune systems for other reasons.

Recently many people with COVID-19 have been diagnosed with mucormycosis. It is not currently known if this is due to COVID-19 or some other reason.

2 How does the infection spread



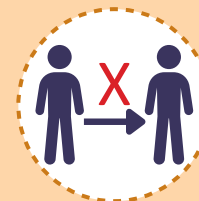
The fungi are found throughout the environment, and most people breathe them in without any effect.



People with a weak immune system can develop infection in the sinuses and lungs when the fungi enter their airways.



In rare cases, skin infection occurs, usually only after a skin injury.



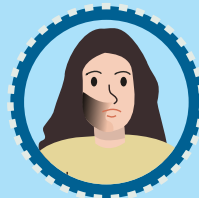
They do not spread from person to person.



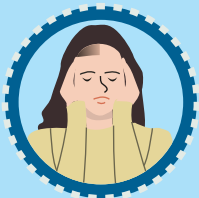
In some rare cases, it has been known to affect the gastro-intestinal system.

3 How can I recognize it

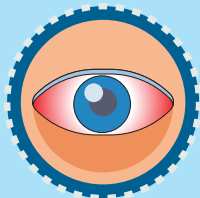
Some common symptoms of mucormycosis are:



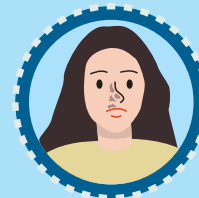
Swelling of the face and around the eye, usually on one side.



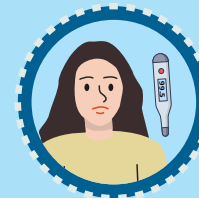
Facial pain or headache, usually on one side.



Red eye, usually on one side.



Black patches on the nose or the roof of the mouth: if you have these, please speak to a health care provider urgently.



Fever.

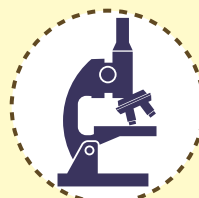
Many of these symptoms, such as fever and headache, are also common symptoms of other diseases, including COVID-19. Mucormycosis needs to be confirmed through a laboratory test. If you are at greater risk (refer to section 1) and have these symptoms consult your health care provider.

4 How is mucormycosis detected

The usual way to confirm is for a health care provider to



Take a sample from the inside of the nose or a sinus for laboratory testing.



See the fungus under a microscope or grow it using 'fungal culture'.



Also conduct scans or camera-based (endoscopy) tests of the sinuses, head and lungs if necessary.

5 What is the treatment

Strictly follow your health care provider's advice.



Mucormycosis is treated with antifungal medicines. These must only be used as advised by a health care provider.



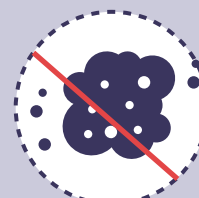
Surgery may also be needed around the nose and eyes sometimes.



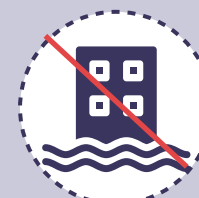
Do not self-medicate – these drugs can have harmful effects if they are not used properly.

6 How can we protect ourselves

Most healthy people are at very low risk of this disease. There is no vaccine for mucormycosis. Those at greater risk (refer to section 1) could reduce their risk by protecting themselves from the fungi in the environment:



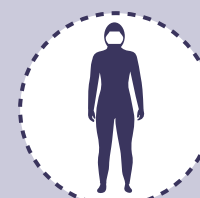
Avoid areas with a lot of dust, like construction sites.



Avoid damp buildings or those damaged by water, for example due to floods and cyclones.



Avoid close contact with soil.



Wear clothes that cover arms and legs while working outdoors.



If you cut your skin, clean the injury area with soap and water.