

Infections of the Skin

People with damaged immune systems due to HIV can experience skin problems. These can be caused by a variety of germs, including viruses, bacteria, and fungi. These infections are rarely fatal, but they can be extremely frustrating to deal with and sometimes do not go away without treatment.

Molluscum Contagiosum

What is it?

This infection is caused by a virus called the molluscum contagiosum virus (MCV). It can cause hard flesh-coloured bumps that appear on virtually any part of the body, especially around the mouth and nose or near the genitals.

How is it treated?

The HIV/AIDS Policy Guideline recommends three treatments:

- Applying a liquid (tincture of iodine or phenol) directly to the bumps.
- Cryotherapy: A doctor can apply liquid nitrogen to the bumps to freeze them. This causes the bumps to die and fall off and allows healthy skin to form.
- Surgery: The bumps can be surgically removed by a doctor.

Seborrhoea

What is it?

Seborrhoea is a common skin problem and is sometimes caused by a fungus. It causes a red, itchy rash and white scales. When it affects the scalp, it is called *dandruff*. It can be on parts of the face as well, including the folds around the nose and behind the ears, the forehead, and the eyebrows and eyelids. On the body, seborrhoea often occurs in the middle part of the chest, around the navel and in the skin folds under the arm, below the breasts and in the groin and buttocks area.

How is it treated?

Seborrhoea of the skin can usually be treated with a cream. The creams recommended by the HIV/AIDS Policy Guide include hydrocortisone, a topical azole cream, or terbinafine cream.

Severe dandruff can be treated using a liquid applied directly to the scalp (selenium sulphide). It needs to be left on the scalp for ten minutes and then rinsed off. Another option is to use an anti-dandruff shampoo recommended by your doctor.

Folliculitis

What is it?

Folliculitis is an infection of the hair follicles (where hair grows in the skin). The usual cause is the bacteria *Staphylococcus* (staph) or by a fungus. It may occur anywhere on the skin, as a result of injury or damage to the hair follicle caused by friction from clothing, by blockage of the follicle, or by such things as shaving.

Folliculitis can appear as a rash or pimples around the hair follicle. It can cause itching.

How is it treated?

Your doctor can take a sample of the affected area to determine which germ is