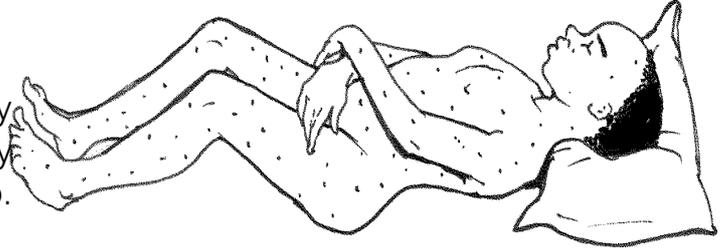


Shingles and HIV

Anybody, especially old people, can get shingles, but it is more often seen in people with a weak immune system. People living with HIV often get it in a worse form and sometimes even get it more than once.

Chickenpox also caused by Herpes Zoster Virus

Blisters over the whole body are usually called chickenpox. They form an itchy crust and disappear after a week or two. Chickenpox can cause fever.



Treatment

Apply Calamine lotion against the itch. Antihistamine medicine also helps to reduce the itch. Take Paracetamol tablets for the fever, but not Aspirin.



Pus in the skin: bacterial infection

There are different skin problems that can lead to pus – a yellow or green fluid that can ooze out of sores. Sometimes pus is smelly. It is formed when your body's white blood cells fight bacteria.

Treating bacterial skin infections

Personal hygiene is very important. Wash your whole body with soap and water daily. Keep fingernails short and clean. Prevent yourself from scratching your skin by sleeping with socks over the hands. The group of medicines that fight bacteria is called antibiotics. Medicines used to treat bacterial skin infections are Flucloxacillin and Erythromycin tablets. It also helps to apply an antibacterial cream like Zinc-and-Vioform or Zinc Oxide. If the infection is swollen, painful, hot and reddish it helps to apply hot towels to the area. If a boil or abscess develops, a doctor might need to cut it open to release the pus.

Warts: viral infections

There are different types of warts on the skin. The usual warts are caused by Human Pappiloma Virus or **HPV**. They are best treated by regularly applying a Podophyllin paste. If they are too bad, they might have to be removed by a doctor.

Other warts have a little hole on their tip. They are caused by a virus called **Moluscum Contagiosum**. The doctor should open the biggest ones with a needle and remove the pips.



Then iodine ink can be applied. This often helps the body to start fighting the warts. If the warts are too bad the doctor might have to remove them all.

If warts are a different colour to your skin you might have **Kaposi's Sarcoma**. Show them to your nurse or doctor as soon as possible. Kaposi's Sarcoma is the most serious skin problem people living with HIV can get. It is classified as HIV stage four.

Ringworms, athlete's foot and flaky skin problems: fungal infections

A fungus is a type of germ that often occurs on the skin. If it forms a circle on the skin it is called ringworm. If it occurs as white dying skin between the toes it is called athlete's foot. This also occurs quite often in the groins, around the private parts or under the arms. Nappy rash in babies is often caused by fungus.

Treatment

- All of these problems can be treated with anti-fungal cream. Miconazole or Clotrimazole cream is good.
- If the skin gets red and oozes with fluid you have a bacterial infection on top of the fungal infection. You then also have to take antibiotic medicines as explained above.
- The fungus can also affect the fingernails or toenails, which makes them thick and rough. It can affect the skin on your head, which can cause your hair to fall out. These problems need to be treated with Griseofulvin tablets for several months.
- Fungus on the face that causes itchy flaky skin around the eyes, nose and mouth is called seborrhoeic dermatitis. Treatment includes washing your hair with selsun shampoo and washing with aqueous cream. Also apply an anti-fungal cream in the evening and a steroid cream in the morning.
- Sometimes the fungus cryptococcus can also affect HIV positive people's skin. The infection looks like a mixture between a wart and a blister. The doctor will make the diagnosis by sending a specimen to the laboratory. However, cryptococcus usually affects the brain, not the skin. It is classified as HIV stage four. It can be treated with life-long Fluconazole tablets.



Itchy rash

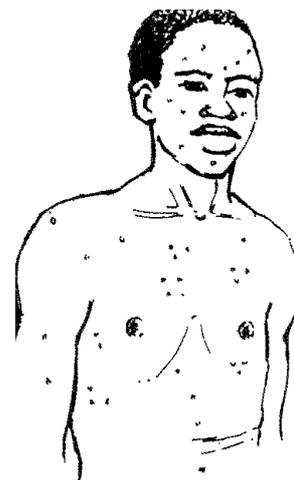
There are many causes for itchy skin: infection, allergy, dry skin, side-effects to medicines, scabies and itchy bump disease, also called PPE – pruritic papular eruption. Scratching makes the problem worse. Scratching releases histamine chemicals in the skin, which causes more itching. Scratching



can spread the problem to other parts of the body or add an infection to the original problem.

Treating itch

- Often the itch is made worse by dry skin. It helps to wash with **aqueous cream or an emulsifying bath oil**.
- You can also use **anti-histamine** tablets like Chlorphenamine or Promethazine.
- **Steroid** creams like Hydrocortisone or Betamethasone can also help.
- If scabies is suspected, treat all household members with Benzyl Benzoate and wash all linen.



Rashes as side effect to medicines

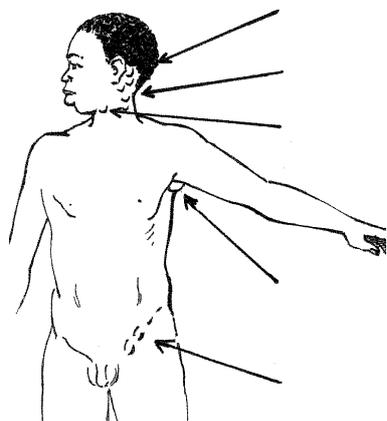
Many hair-straighteners and gels cause pimples in the face. There are also many medicines that can cause side effects to the skin. Laxatives, Cotrimoxazole, TB medicines, Penicillin related antibiotics, anti-epilepsy treatments and some antiretrovirals like Nevirapine and Efavirenz are most commonly responsible. Side effects can be a slightly reddish rash present for a few minutes, or a more severe itchy rash. It can also be a dangerous rash called Steven Johnson's Syndrome, which causes red eyes, blisters in the mouth and the skin to drop off like with burn wounds.

Treatment

Show all side effects to your nurse or doctor. Your medicine might have to be replaced. Alternatively you can carry on with the same medicines, but take more medicines to control the side effects. If you know you get side effects from specific medicines, always remind your nurse or doctor.

Irritating bumps in the neck: swollen lymph glands

Many people living with HIV have the problem of swollen lymph glands. They form bumps in the neck, under the arms or in the groin. Although they can be caused by TB or a skin infection, most of the time they are caused by HIV itself. Swollen lymph glands are usually a good sign. They show your immune system is still strong enough to fight the HIV. In most cases you don't have to worry about them. If you have no other problems swollen lymph glands are classified as HIV stage one.



What does it look like?

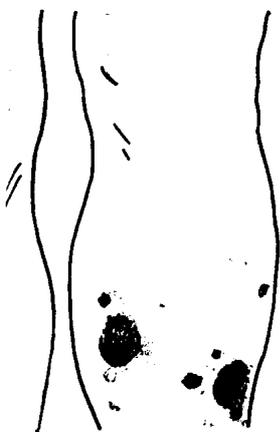
Kaposi's Sarcoma, often simply called KS, is most often seen on the skin or inside the mouth. It appears as several brown or purple hard blisters. In early stages of the disease it is neither painful nor itchy. Therefore you might ignore it when you first notice it. Your doctor/nurse will often not notice it unless you specifically point out these lesions to her/him. The earlier you and your doctor notice KS growths or skin changes, the better. Sometimes the KS also affects your lymph nodes (causing swelling of the legs) your lungs (causing shortness of breath) or your intestines (usually going unnoticed).



Who gets it?

Some people know their HIV status for years and then develop the first KS lesions. In South Africa almost all people who have KS have a weak immune system. KS usually goes hand in hand with being HIV positive. KS can sometimes be the first illness that points the doctor to making your HIV diagnosis.

KS is usually not seen in children. In South Africa more women than men get Kaposi's Sarcoma. However, in the USA more men (and especially gay men) get KS. In the USA, where Kaposi's Sarcoma was previously unknown, the sudden emergence of several people with Kaposi's Sarcoma led doctors to the idea that there was a new illness in 1981. However, the specific virus was only identified in 1983 and then named HIV/AIDS. Before the emergence of HIV Kaposi's Sarcoma was only seen in people in tropical Central Africa. Here it still occurs in HIV positive and in HIV negative people. However, it is much more serious in people who are HIV positive.



What is it medically speaking?

KS is a form of cancer that involves the blood vessels of the skin, the mucous membranes and the lymphatic system. This cancer is caused by herpes like viruses that are sexually transmitted. Practicing safer sex after your HIV diagnosis can protect you against KS.



What is a cancer?

Cancer is the abnormal growth of cells of the body. Your body is made up of billions of microscopically small cells. They all grow from a single cell once a woman's egg cell is fertilised by a man's sperm cell. The number of cells increase by a process called cell division. Each body part is made up of a collection of specialised cells. In some body parts (heart, brain) the process of cell division stops once they have been fully formed. In other body parts cell division carries on lifelong to replace constantly damaged and decaying cells. For instance, in the bone marrow, cells divide rapidly throughout life to form new blood cells. When the fine balance of cell division gets disturbed, a cancer can grow. For example, constant exposure to smoking in the lungs can cause lung cancer. Cancers that are more common in people living with HIV are KS, cervix cancer of the womb and lymphoma cancer of the lymph nodes.

Making the diagnosis of KS

Most often your nurse or doctor will be able to identify KS by looking at it. In very few cases the doctor will cut a small piece of your skin after providing local pain relief and send it to a laboratory to make sure of the diagnosis. Sometimes your nurse or doctor will ask you to see a skin doctor (dermatologist) or a cancer doctor (oncologist) to help manage your problem.

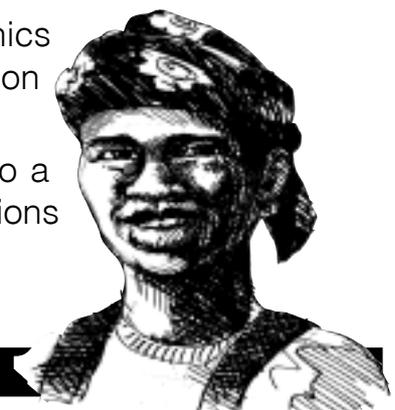
Staging of HIV

KS is a bit like TB in the way that it can affect you at any stage of HIV illness and at any CD4 count. However, the lower your CD4 count, the bigger your chances of getting KS.

Once you have KS, this is classified as WHO stage 4 or AIDS. At the moment only the use of antiretrovirals can significantly slow down this progression of HIV.

Treatment for KS

- ❑ **Passive Treatment (observe and wait):** Most often your nurse/doctor will tell you that no specific treatment for KS is necessary. This is often true. However, many symptoms you might feel at this stage might actually be symptoms of other illnesses like TB, diarrhoea, etc. You have to inform your nurse/doctor of these, so that they can be treated. When the KS lesions themselves cause problems you might benefit from cancer treatment.
- ❑ **Cancer Treatment:** At specialised cancer treatment clinics there are two major treatment options. They are radiation and chemotherapy.
- ❑ **Radiation** is a strong form of X-ray that is focussed onto a single point in order to kill cells. When one or two KS lesions



cause a problem e.g. bulging in the face, or difficulty in swallowing, or when lesions start to bleed, radiation can be used to “burn” away these lesions and relieve the symptoms. However, it does not cure the KS.



- **Chemotherapy** is a medication that kills cells that are busy with cell division. Cancer cells usually divide faster than normal body cells. Thus chemotherapy mainly kills off the cells of the KS lesions. Chemotherapy is used when KS is widespread throughout the body to relieve symptoms, e.g. shortness of breath. Chemotherapy can affect other body parts where fast cell division takes place, thereby causing side effects. This can happen in the intestines, where it can cause nausea or diarrhoea. It can also happen in the bone-marrow, where it can cause a lowering of the white blood cells. This is a serious side effect for people who are HIV positive, as they often have a lack of white blood cells already.
- **ARV treatment (antiretrovirals):** Antiretrovirals (ARVs) can change the treatment course for people with KS significantly. Triple therapy of ARVs (HAART) can block the HIV virus. This results in an improvement of the CD4 cells. As the immune system gets stronger it often manages to fight the KS lesions. Sometimes the KS lesions can disappear completely as a result of being on ARVs. If the KS remains, the doctors will be able to use stronger combinations of chemotherapy as they do not have to fear lowering of the white-blood cells, as a result of bone-marrow side effects, so much.
- **Psychological treatment:** If you realise that you suffer emotionally from the KS you should discuss this with your counsellor. It might be the visibility of the lesions that bothers you, or fear of cancer, or a renewed awareness of your HIV status. Talking about these feelings in a support group helps a lot. You might need to ask your doctor to prescribe some tablets for depression for some time.



Patches in the mouth: thrush

Thrush can appear as white patches on the tongue or anywhere else in the mouth. It can also appear as a burning red surface of the mouth. It can cause itching or sores on the corners of the mouth. It makes food lose its taste. All these problems are called oral thrush. It is caused by a fungal germ called candida. All people have this germ in their mouths. However, it only causes symptoms in people with a weak immune system. Thrush of the mouth is classified as HIV stage three.



Treatment



Thrush is treated with Nystatin mouth medicines. If this does not help you might need something stronger like Amphotericin B or Miconazole mouth medicines. Mouth medicines are either a liquid, gel, sucking tablet or gum-patch that needs to be kept in the mouth for as long as possible. If none of these work or if the thrush is very bad and recurs regularly the best medicine is Fluconazole tablets.

Painful swallowing: oesophageal thrush

Sometimes the thrush goes down to the stomach. This is called oesophageal thrush. You will experience chest pain when you swallow. Pain of the throat is common, but is not caused by oesophageal thrush. Oesophageal thrush is classified as HIV stage four.

Treatment

Oesophageal thrush is treated with Fluconazole tablets. Make sure this medicine is available at your clinic.

Oral Hairy Leucoplakia (OHL)

Some people living with HIV get white stripes on the side of the tongue. This is called OHL or Oral Hairy Leucoplakia. It is not dangerous and needs no treatment. OHL is classified as HIV stage three.

Teeth with holes



Holes in teeth are caused by germs. People living with HIV are more likely to get bad teeth. This is particularly common in children. Try to prevent this by brushing the teeth regularly. Brush teeth in the morning, the evening and after every

