

Mucormycosis or Black Fungus

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In news

In Delhi, doctors flag Covid-linked deadly fungal infection after Ganga Ram hospital sees more than ten cases in 15 days

What is mucormycosis or black fungus?

Black Fungus or Mucormycosis, previously called zygomycosis, is a serious but rare fungal infection **caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes** which exist in the environment.

This fungal infection causes loss of eyesight, removal of the nose and jaw bone, and 50 per cent mortality in cases where it affects the brain within 15 days.

What are molds?

- Mold is a type of fungus. These small organisms can be black, white, orange, green, or purple and live almost anywhere indoors and outside.
- Molds thrive on moisture and reproduce through lightweight spores that travel through the air.

What are Mucormycetes?

- Mucormycetes, the group of fungi that cause mucormycosis, are present throughout the environment, particularly in soil and in association with decaying organic matter, such as leaves, compost piles, and animal dung.
- They are more common in soil than in air, and in summer and fall than in winter or spring

Whom does it affect the most?

Black fungus mainly affects people who have health problems or take medicines that lower the body's ability to fight germs and sickness.

What are the symptoms of mucormycosis or black fungus?

Mucormycosis presents itself as either a respiratory or a skin infection. With a skin infection, mucormycosis can develop within any part of your body. It may initially occur at the site of skin trauma, but it can quickly spread to another area. Following are the symptoms of both:

- The symptoms of sinus or respiratory infection are face numbness, one-side nose obstructions or swelling of eyes, or pain, headache, cough, fever, sinus pain, etc
- The symptoms of skin infection are blackened skin tissue, blisters, fever, redness and swelling

Causes of mucormycosis

Mucormycosis is caused by exposure to mucormycetes molds. These organisms occur in:

- leaves
- piles of compost
- soil
- rotting wood

One can contract mucormycosis by breathing in affected mold spores in the air (sinus). The fungus can also infect one's skin via a cut or burn (cutaneous exposure). In such cases, the wound or burn ends up becoming the area of infection.