

# After COVID-19, It Is White Fungus

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## White Fungus

Fungi are the eukaryotic microorganisms that have a cellular wall. They do not photosynthesize. They exist as spores or parasitize organisms. Fungi invade keratinized tissues such as horny cell layer, hairs and nails in case of superficial mycoses whereas fungi tend to parasitize the dermis and deeper layers in case of deep fungal infection.

White Fungus (Aspergillosis) is an infection that is caused by *Aspergillus* which is usually found in soil, plants, rotting material, dust in home, air conditioning ducts etc. It is also found in marijuana and dried fish. It mainly affects people with weakened immune system that put them at higher risk of infection. Symptoms of white fungus include difficulty talking, paralysis of facial muscles, ulcers inside the mouth or inside the chest wall, confusion, seizures or stroke-like symptoms, which could mean the infection has spread to the brain.

## White Fungus and COVID-19

When the government was busy dealing the black fungus epidemic, another fungal infection white Fungus aka Aspergillosis has started to spread its wings. White fungus is four times more dangerous than black fungus and may damage many parts of the body and spreads in the lungs. It shows severe effects on the kidney, mouth, skin, and brain. Young children are also being affected by white fungus. Four white fungus cases have been reported in Patna recently. The other symptoms of white fungus in COVID patients include cough, fever, Diarrhea, Dark spots on lungs, reduced oxygen levels.

## How it starts and Diagnosis

The white fungus begins from the tongue or private parts due to which, it makes the tongue white. It then spreads to other organs along with lungs, brains, food pipes. The white fungus attacks people with co morbidities. People with cancer, excess blood sugar are more prone to white fungus. Usually this infection starts out as a spot in your lung which is referred to as "nodule". Sometimes

this nodule can be mistaken for lung cancer or tuberculosis. However it can be differentiated by symptoms i.e. when it is a nodule just caused by fungus it will not show any symptoms. The fungus may develop into fungus ball, pulmonary nodules or pneumonia in overtime. The symptoms of 'white fungus' are similar to those of COVID and the infection can be diagnosed through CT-scan or X-ray. Tissue biopsy is the only way to diagnose Aspergillosis with certainty where a piece of the lung is taken as sampling. Other tests that can be done include examining your sputum (mucus or phlegm) or taking cultures from your airways (breathing tubes). Culture specimens can be collected by a bronchoscopy. There is a test called serum galactomannan test which identifies fungus in the blood but is not 100% accurate.

## Preventive Measures

It is difficult to avoid being exposed to *Aspergillus*. People with weak immune system should take special precautions which protect them from fungus. Wear N95 masks, Avoid being around in dusty areas, avoid things like gardening, wash the reusable masks daily and dry them properly. If the masks are not washed regularly it serves a suitable condition for growth of fungus. In the case of higher risk like low WBC count or leukemia, it is advised to use anti fungal drugs.

## Treatment

Aspergillosis can be treated using anti-fungal drugs which include itraconazole, posaconazole, Amphotericin B, capsogunin. These drugs have to be prescribed only by the physician only after the diagnosis. Surgery may be recommended when the treatment does not improve with the drugs. In case of surgery, they remove the fungus balls that are formed in lungs. Treatment for allergic reactions includes a corticosteroid by mouth and an anti-fungal drug like itraconazole, which are often taken for several months.

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