

Is Covid-19 Causing Skin Diseases?



By Dr. Vaani Valerie A/P Visuvanathan, Dermatologist at Aurelius Hospital Nilai

In 2019, the world underwent a global pandemic, Covid-19 global pandemic caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Non-pharmaceutical interventions known as lockdowns and quarantines were implemented to reduce the spread of the virus. The most common Covid-19 symptoms include headache, loss of smell and taste, diarrhoea and breathing difficulties. However, not known to many, Covid-19 is also associated with significant complications that affect a majority of organ systems such as the central nervous system, intestinal tract, cardiovascular system and skin. Overall, about 7% of Covid-19 patients are reported to have one or more skin symptoms.

What are the types of skin diseases associated with Covid-19?

The most common skin condition linked to Covid-19 is a morbilliform rash that resembles measles in appearance, consisting of spots that are scattered across the skin. Some may overlap to form bigger patches of discolouration on the skin. Patients have reported that over time it gets itchier. Next, Urticaria or hives that doctors refer to raised, itchy bumps on the skin as welts or wheals. Current evidence suggests that urticaria is associated with milder instances of COVID-19. On average, urticaria lasts less than one week and is reported to be found in 105 out of 895 Covid-19 patients.

Another type of skin manifestation associated with COVID-19 is vesicles which consist of tiny fluid filled bumps like chickenpox. According to a study, vesicles are documented in 18 out of 24 cases.

Additionally, some Covid-19-positive patients develop a condition referred to as “Covid toes”, which are often referred to as painful chilblain-like-lesions. These lesions typically resolve within two weeks and are non-scarring, often accompanied by itching. COVID toes appear to be more prevalent among younger patients, primarily children.

Is it safe to take the vaccine when you have skin diseases?

To this very day, people still wonder if it's safe to take the vaccine? Hesitancy to receive the vaccine may arise especially in those with underlying skin disorders. There is research on the possibility of Covid-19 vaccine causing these skin conditions, as mentioned above. associated with the virus. The results from these studies show that there may be occasional side effects, however, it is more apparent among patients who already have eczema prior to taking the vaccine.

There are also cases where patients with eczema experienced flare-ups after receiving the vaccine, but they were easily manageable. It can be found that having eczema does not worsen your COVID-19 symptoms and taking the vaccine will only reduce the chances of you contracting Covid-19.

How to treat skin diseases associated with COVID-19

To treat morbilliform rash, it is recommended to get prescribed steroid creams and tablets called antihistamines to treat the itchiness. Similarly, to treat urticaria, antihistamine is prescribed to patients as both of those diseases are types of rashes. However, if a patient is reported to have vesicles, they are advised to seek medical attention. With Covid toes, painkillers such as paracetamol are said to be helpful in easing the pain.

However, if any signs of redness spread on the skin, medical advice is necessary. Severe acne breakouts call for medical advice as using off-the-shelf products can cause more damage. Seek your nearest dermatologist's advice when dealing with any skin disease that worsens over time. Our skin is the largest organ of our body. It is crucial to diligently maintain its well-being and seek medical attention in the presence of concerning issues.