Oral Fungal Infections



Diagnosis and Management

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KEYWORDS

- Candidiasis Oral thrush Oral fungal infection Mucormycosis Histoplasmosis
- Blastomycosis Aspergillosis Geotrichosis

KEY POINTS

- Most solitary or primary oral fungal infections are rare with the exception of oral candidiasis
- Candidiasis is the leading infection that most dental practitioners will see in clinical practice.
- Unless diagnosed early and treated aggressively, mucormycosis can be a locally invasive and disfiguring oral and maxillofacial fungal infection.
- This review includes several oral and maxillofacial fungal infections, including mucormycosis, candidiasis, aspergillosis, blastomycosis, histoplasmosis, cryptococcosis, and coccidioidomycosis.

INTRODUCTION

Fungal infections are of great concern in dentistry. Patients may present with infections that can be superficial or indicative of a more serious systemic illness. This article focuses on fungal infections that can range from primary (superficial) to disseminated infections that have a high mortality. Included in the review are the most common oral and maxillofacial fungal infections, route of spread, diagnosis, treatment as well

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as prevention. Although uncommon in a dental practice setting, one may encounter fungal infections, such as candidiasis, mucormycosis, histoplasmosis, blastomycosis, aspergillosis, cryptococcosis, geotrichosis and coccidioidomycosis. **Table 1** is a broader and comprehensive list of potential oral and maxillofacial fungal infections to serve as reference if one encounters an uncommon organism not covered in this article.

CANDIDIASIS

Candida is a dimorphic yeast (fungus) found commonly in the gastrointestinal tract of humans and as normal flora of the skin and mucous membranes. In its normal form. Candida is not pathogenic and stays in balance such that it cannot progress to cause infection. Typically, Candida infections occur when one of several scenarios happen, including but not limited to, host defenses becoming compromised, a breakdown of the normal skin or mucosal barrier, a disturbance of the host by external factors (such as intake of broad-spectrum antibiotics), or other internal/external risk factors increasing the likelihood of a Candida infection. The Candida species consists of 2- to 6-μm yeastlike organisms that reproduce through budding. The genus Candida includes more than 200 species, most of which are not pathogenic in humans.² The most common Candida species encountered is Candida albicans and accounts for more than 90% of oral cavity isolates. 3,4 Other common Candida species encountered with human pathogenicity include Candida parapsilosis, Candida tropicalis, Candida glabrata, Candida krusei, Candida guilliermondii, and Candida lusitaniae.4 In healthy individuals, Candida spp is reported to be present in 25% to 75% of the population in the absence of any lesion caused by Candida. 5,6

Candidiasis can present in several forms of infection depending on how deeply the organism has spread, or if host defenses allow for more substantial infections. The most commonly encountered infection from *Candida* is oral thrush, also known as pseudomembranous candidiasis. This type of infection is typically characterized by a white cottage cheese–like film that clinically can be wiped off to reveal a base that

Table 1 Superficial and deep oral and maxillofacial fungal infections			
Superficial mycoses		Deep mycoses	
Candidiasis		Subcutaneous	
Hyperplastic	Stomatitis	Sporotrichosis	Entomophthoromycosis
Erythematous	Median rhomboid glossitis	Lobomycosis	Chromomycosis
Pseudomembranous	Cutaneous	Rhinosporidiosis	
Angular cheilitis	Pneumonia		
Deep systemic mycoses			
Histoplasmosis	Blastomycosis	Coccidioidomycosis	Paracoccidioidomycosis
Cryptococcosis			
Deep opportunistic			
Aspergillosis	Mucormycosis	Geotrichosis	Trichosporon
Penicilliosis	Basidiomycosis	Cephalosporiomycosis	Paecilomycosis
Alternariosis	Cercosporomycosis	Fusariomycosis	

Various potential oral and maxillofacial fungal infections; all bolded are included in the focus of this article.

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