

The background is a solid teal color. It is decorated with several large, overlapping, light blue, rounded, teardrop-shaped elements that have a slight gradient and shadow, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. These shapes are scattered across the frame, some partially cut off by the edges.

*Rash: The Gut-Skin
Connection Behind
Fungal Infections*

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Rash: The Gut-Skin Connection
Behind Fungal Infections

A Functional Medicine Guide to Chronic Rashes, Gut Imbalance, and Skin Healing

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Is Your Rash Just a Rash or a Deeper Sign? Have you ever dealt with a rash that just won't go away? It might start as a red patch, a bit of flaking, or a spot of itchiness —nothing major at first. But then it comes back. Again. And again. You try a few creams, maybe change your soaps or detergents, and for a little while, it improves. Then, without warning, it's back in the same spot or worse, it spreads.



This is something I've seen countless times in my clinic. Patients walk in frustrated, often embarrassed, carrying a bag full of half-used ointments and lotions. They've been told it is eczema, or just dry skin. But in many cases, we're dealing with something else: a fungal skin infection that's being fueled by an internal imbalance.

In this guide, we'll explore why fungal infections occur, where they show up, who's most at risk, and—most importantly—how functional medicine helps identify the real root cause. Because sometimes, the answer isn't on your skin at all. It's in your gut.

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Chapter 2: Why Do Fungal
Infections Happen?

Fungi are opportunists. They're all around us—and on us—all the time. In fact, your skin and gut both naturally contain species like *Candida*, *Malassezia*, and dermatophytes. In small amounts, they don't cause trouble. But when the environment shifts in their favor, they take over.

So what changes the environment?

A weak immune system is one of the most common reasons. If your body is under stress, emotionally or physically, it lowers your defenses. Add to that the perfect conditions for fungi: moisture from sweat, a compromised skin barrier from scratches or eczema, or the aftermath of antibiotic or steroid use, and you've set the stage.

Let's take "Sarah," a busy mom who came to me with what looked like recurring jock itch, despite not being an athlete. It turned out she had been on two rounds of antibiotics that year and was dealing with chronic stress and sugar cravings. We treated the rash, yes, but we also addressed her gut health and her stress response. And the rash didn't come back.

That's what we mean when we say: treat the root, not just the rash.



Chapter 3: Where Do Fungal
Infections Show Up?



Nails – Thick, discolored, brittle nails are often a sign of fungal overgrowth. Nail salons that don't sanitize tools properly can be a source of infection.

Skin folds – Under the breasts, belly, or between the thighs, fungal infections thrive where the skin stays damp. People with diabetes or excess weight are particularly vulnerable.

Face and chest – Seborrheic dermatitis (those flaky, oily patches around your nose, eyebrows, or ears) is often caused by an overgrowth of *Malassezia*, a type of yeast that naturally lives on the skin. Scalp seborrheic dermatitis presents as dandruff.



Fungal infections love warmth, moisture, and friction, which makes certain parts of the body more vulnerable than others. Here's where they most commonly appear:

Feet (Athlete's Foot) – Common in people who wear tight shoes, sweat a lot, or use public showers. Locker rooms and gym floors are breeding grounds for the fungus that causes it.

Groin (Jock Itch) – This isn't just for athletes. Anyone with moisture and friction in the groin area can develop it, especially in hot, humid climates or with synthetic underwear.

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Chapter 4: Who's Most
at Risk?



While fungal infections can affect anyone, some people are far more likely to experience recurring issues.

People with weakened immune systems, whether from chronic illness, autoimmune disease, diabetes, or long-term stress, are at the top of the list. Their immune systems may struggle to keep the skin and gut microbiomes in balance.

Athletes and gym-goers are another high-risk group, simply because they're constantly exposed to sweat, friction, and communal spaces like locker rooms.

People who have taken antibiotics or corticosteroids are often surprised to learn that these medications can wipe out beneficial bacteria, giving yeast and fungi more room to grow.

A high-sugar or high-carb diet feeds yeast from the inside. If you're constantly craving sweets or carbs, you may be unknowingly fueling a hidden fungal overgrowth.

And finally, people with gut dysbiosis, a disruption in the balance of bacteria and yeast in the gut, often see the effects on their skin.

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Chapter 5: The Gut-
Skin Connection

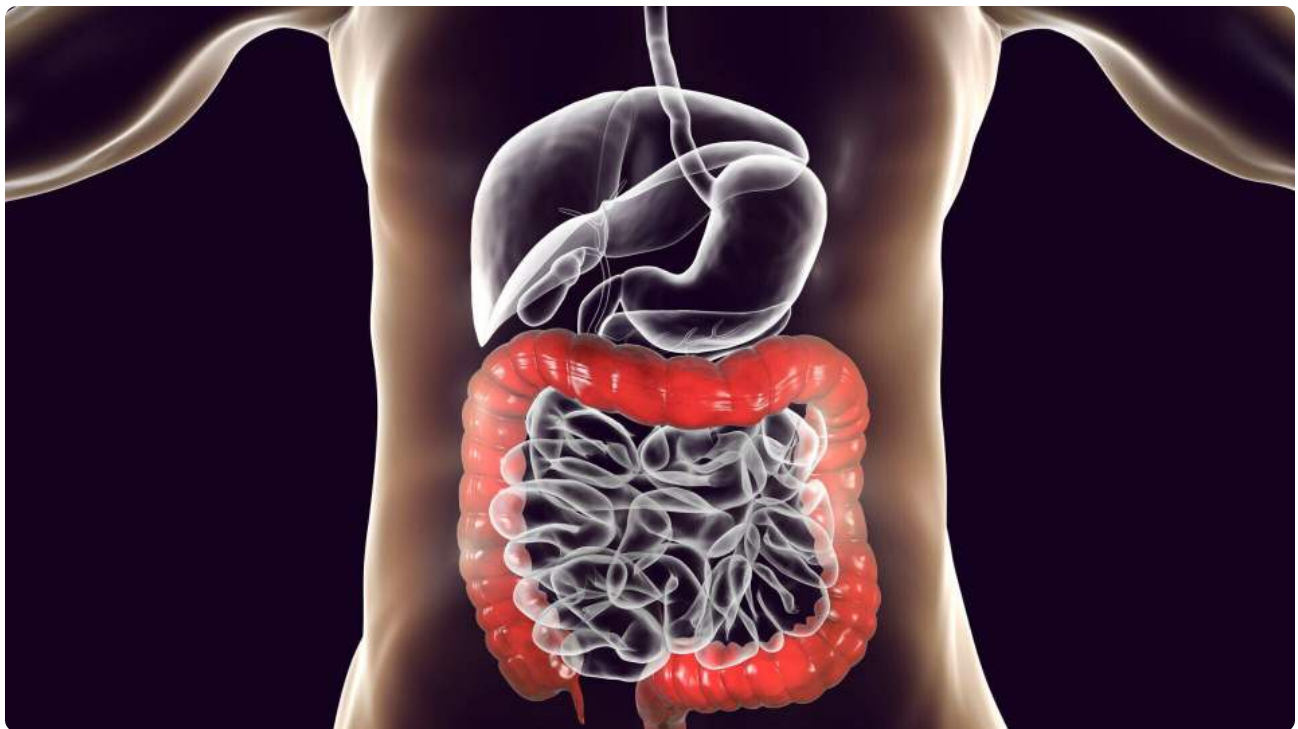
Let's talk about what's going on beneath the surface.

If your fungal infection keeps coming back, the real issue might not be on your skin. It might be in your digestive system. That's where your gut microbiome lives: trillions of bacteria, yeast, and fungi that work together to digest food, regulate immunity, and maintain balance.

When that balance is thrown off by antibiotics, diet, stress, or poor sleep, yeast like *Candida albicans* can overgrow and cause trouble, not only in the gut but throughout the body.

Let's take "James", a patient who struggled with dandruff and flaky skin around his nose for years. Nothing helped long term. When we tested his gut, we found significant yeast overgrowth and low beneficial bacteria. Once we corrected his gut environment, his skin finally cleared.

This is why functional medicine matters. It doesn't stop at treating symptoms: it looks at where they're coming from.



Chapter 6: Functional Medicine
Approach: Healing from the Inside
Out

So, how do we fix the problem, not just cover it up?

In functional medicine, we begin by restoring gut balance. That means:

Cutting out sugar and processed carbs, which feed yeast.

Adding probiotics through fermented foods and supplements to reintroduce good bacteria.

Supporting digestion with enzymes, especially if you experience bloating or gas after meals.

Then, we use natural antifungals to reduce yeast:

Caprylic acid (from coconut oil) weakens fungal membranes. Oregano oil and berberine act as potent antifungal agents.

We don't stop at the gut. We also protect the skin barrier with:

Topical antifungal creams or powders (natural or medical)

Avoiding harsh soaps, synthetic lotions, and damp clothing

Moisturizing with simple oils like coconut or jojoba

Finally, we strengthen the immune system because it's your body's built-in defense line:

Improving sleep hygiene

Managing stress through breathwork or mindfulness

Supplementing with vitamin D, zinc, and omega-3s



Chapter 7: How to Test for Fungal Infections (Including Functional Testing)

If you've been struggling with recurring fungal issues, the first step is identifying the root cause. This is where testing comes in.

Conventional dermatologists often use skin scrapings or nail clippings to look for fungus under a microscope. These tests are useful for diagnosing conditions like athlete's foot or nail fungus.

But if the infection keeps coming back, deeper testing may be needed.

A comprehensive gut test (often ordered through functional medicine clinics) can uncover imbalances in your microbiome, like overgrowth of *Candida* or *Malassezia*, and reveal inflammatory markers and immune function.

Other valuable tests include: Organic Acids Test (OAT), which detects yeast metabolites like arabinose in urine. Food Sensitivity Testing identifies inflammatory reactions to foods that could worsen yeast imbalance.

These insights help us create a personalized plan for long-term healing, not just temporary relief.



Chapter 8: Final Thoughts: What
Your Skin Might Be Telling You

Your skin is a messenger. It often shows us what's going on inside before we even realize it.

If you've dealt with recurring rashes, flaky skin, or fungal infections that just don't respond to treatment, it may be time to listen more closely.

Ask yourself:

Did your symptoms begin after antibiotics or steroids?

Do you struggle with sugar cravings or carb-heavy meals?

Are you feeling tired, bloated, or foggy in addition to skin flare-ups?

If the answer is yes to any of these, your skin could be telling you it's time to heal your gut.



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Chapter 9: Ready to Go
Deeper?

You don't have to live with uncomfortable, embarrassing, or chronic skin issues. There is a smarter way to heal by working with your body, not just covering up symptoms.

If you're ready to explore a functional medicine approach to your skin and gut health, I invite you to visit our functional clinic website: www.mindfulmedicalfunctionalclinic.com



There, you'll find information about testing, virtual consultations, and personalized treatment plans designed to support your whole system: skin, gut, and beyond.

Let's take the first step toward true healing—from the inside out.



Rash: The Gut-Skin Connection Behind Fungal Infections by Maria Azizian, MD, FACS, IFMCP

In "Rash: The Gut-Skin Connection Behind Fungal Infections," Dr. Maria Azizian reveals the hidden link between recurring fungal skin issues and internal imbalances, guiding readers through the complexities of gut microbiome health. Drawing on real patient stories, she offers insights into prevention and treatment strategies that go beyond mere symptom relief. Discover how functional medicine can help identify the root causes of your skin problems and restore balance from within.