

Infection is acquired by inhalation of dust containing arthrospores of the fungus. Many persons develop a self-limited influenza-like fever.

4. **Cryptococcosis:**

Cryptococcosis is a chronic infection caused by the yeast **Cryptococcus neoformans**. It is a soil saprophyte and is particularly abundant in the feces of pigeons and other birds. Infection is usually acquired by inhalation but may sometimes be through the skin or mucosa. Most infections are asymptomatic. **Pulmonary cryptococcosis** may lead to a mild pneumonia. Dissemination of infection leads to visceral, cutaneous and meningeal disease. Visceral forms simulate tuberculosis and cancer clinically. Bones and joints may be involved. Cutaneous cryptococcosis varies from small ulcers to large granulomas. **Cryptococcal meningitis** is the most serious type and is often seen in AIDS patients.

5. **Paracoccidioidomycosis:**

This is a chronic granulomatous disease of the skin, mucosa, lymph nodes and internal organs caused by **Paracoccidioides brasiliensis**. The disease is caused by inhalation of spores from the environment. Ulcerative granulomas of the buccal and nasal mucosa are a prominent feature of the disease.

OPPORTUNISTIC SYSTEMIC MYCOSES

Opportunistic infections occur in patients with debilitating disease such as cancer or diabetes, or in whom the physiological state has been upset by immunosuppressive drugs, steroids, x-rays or antibiotics. Opportunistic infections are caused by *Mycobacterium*, *Penicillium* and *Aspergillus*. They are called **opportunistic fungi**.

1. **Candidiasis:**

Candidiasis (Candidosis) is an infection of the skin, mucosa, and internal organs, caused by a yeast-like fungus **Candida albicans**. *Candida* species are normal inhabitants of the skin and mucosa. Candidosis is an opportunistic endogenous infection, the commonest predisposing factor being diabetes.

Common mucosal lesions are **vaginitis** characterized by an acidic discharge and found frequently in pregnancy, **oral thrush** found commonly in bottle fed infants and **conjunctivitis**.

Intestinal candidiasis is a frequent sequel to oral antibiotic therapy and may present as diarrhea. Bronchopulmonary candidiasis is seen as a rare complication of preexisting pulmonary or systemic disease.

2. **Aspergillosis:**

Aspergillus and *Penicillium* constitute the commonest moulds seen on damp bread or almost any other organic matter. Human disease caused by *aspergillus* is otomycosis.