

Black tongue

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CASE

A 59-year old man presented to the outpatient clinic with complaints of black tongue for one week. Physical examination revealed black discoloration of tongue, more pronounced in the central furrow and towards the back (Figure 1). His past history included metastatic prostate cancer, and osteonecrosis of jaw. He was on amoxicillin for 2 months for osteonecrosis of jaw. KOH examination of scrapings from the surface of tongue did not reveal budding yeast or fungal elements. What is the diagnosis?



Figure 1: Black discoloration of tongue, more pronounced in the central furrow

Answer: Black tongue associated with amoxicillin

Amoxicillin was discontinued. Two months later the patient's tongue discoloration improved. Causes of black tongue include smoking¹, infections², medications³ and poor oral hygiene. The color of the tongue usually returns to normal on discontinuation of the offending drugs.

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