



## **RINGWORM**

### **What is it?**

Ringworm is a common skin disorder, especially among children, but it may affect people of all ages. It is caused by a fungus, NOT a worm. It is a fungal infection, which can appear on the skin, nails, scalp or feet (athlete's foot) and is often mistaken for eczema, psoriasis or other skin conditions. Other terms of this fungal infection may include: ringworm of the body (tinea corporas), athlete's foot (tinea pedis), jock itch (tinea cruris) and ringworm of the scalp (tinea capitis).

### **What are the symptoms?**

Ringworm usually appears as a flat, spreading circle that is reddish and has small fluid or pus-filled bumps. The lesion may also be dry, or moist and crusty. On the feet, the fungus usually causes cracks between and under the toes. On the scalp or beard, bald patches may appear. Finger or toenails may become discolored, thick and may even crumble. The fungi that cause ringworm thrive in warm, moist areas and is more likely when a person has frequent wetness (such as from sweating) and minor injuries to area of the skin, scalp, or nails.

### **How is it spread?**

Ringworm is contagious and requires timely attention. It can be passed from one person to the next by direct skin-to-skin contact or by contact with contaminated items such as combs, unwashed clothing, and shower or pool surfaces. You can also catch ringworm from pets that carry the fungus. Cats are common carriers.

### **How is it treated?**

Over-the-counter antifungal or drying powders, lotions, or creams may be helpful. However, a severe or persistent infection may require treatment by a doctor. A health care provider can make a definite diagnosis and prescribe the most effective ointment/cream or oral anti-fungal medication. Children should be excluded from school or childcare. They may return only when 24 hours of treatment are completed **and** lesions are covered with clothing or a bandage. Affected areas must remain covered until lesions start to shrink or fade. In addition, a child must be excluded from swimming areas or walking barefoot in locker rooms or on surfaces surrounding swimming areas until treatment has been initiated. A child participating in contact sports, such as wrestling, should be excluded from activities until lesions are healed.

### **How is ringworm prevented?**

The best prevention is maintaining good personal hygiene, including frequent hand washing and regular bathing. Do not share combs, brushes, other hair accessories, towels or clothing. Good foot care is important too. Wear foot thongs or other protective shoes in community locker rooms, showers, or swimming pools. Also, assure adequate towel or air-drying between the toes and soles of the feet. Avoid touching animals with patches of skin where fur is missing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
SCHD Communicable Disease Unit 330-375-2662  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
Mayo Clinic [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)  
Minnesota Department of Health [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

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