

RINGWORM FACT SHEET

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is a common infection of the skin and nails caused by a fungus. It is called “ringworm” because it can cause a circular rash. Ringworm is also called “tinea”. Other names for ringworm are based on its location on the body—for example, ringworm on the feet is also called “athlete’s foot.”

Who can get ringworm?

Anyone can get ringworm. However, people who use public showers or locker rooms, athletes (particularly those who are involved in contact sports), people who wear tight shoes and have excessive sweating, and people who have close contact with animals may also be more likely to come in contact with the fungi. Additionally, people who have weakened immune systems may be especially at risk for infection. Children may be more susceptible to certain types, such as ringworm of the scalp.

What are the symptoms of ringworm?

The symptoms often depend on which part of the body is infected, but they generally include itchy skin, a ring-shaped rash, red, scaly, cracked skin, and hair loss

- **Ringworm of the scalp** looks like a scaly, itchy, red, circular bald spot. The bald spot can develop and grow in size or multiple spots if infection spreads.
- **Ringworm of the foot** may cause feet to become red, swollen, peeling and itchy skin between the toes. The sole and heel of the foot may also be affected. The skin on the feet can blister in severe cases.

How soon do symptoms of ringworm appear?

Symptoms of ringworm infection typically appear between 4 to 14 days after the skin comes in contact with the fungi.

How is ringworm spread?

The fungi that cause ringworm can live on skin and in the environment. Ringworm can spread through contact with someone who has the infection, touching an animal that has ringworm, and contact with the fungi that cause ringworm

in the environment. The fungi can live on surfaces, particularly in damp areas.

How is ringworm diagnosed?

A healthcare provider can usually diagnose ringworm by looking at the affected skin and asking questions about your symptoms.

How is ringworm treated?

The treatment depends on its location on the body and how serious the infection is. Some forms can be treated with non-prescription (“over-the-counter”) medications, but other forms may require treatment with prescription antifungal medication.

How can people protect themselves against ringworm?

The following steps can be taken to prevent ringworm:

- Keep your skin clean and dry
- Wear shoes that allow air to circulate freely around your feet
- Avoid sharing towels, hats, clothing or other personal items with an infected person
- Don’t walk barefoot in areas such as locker rooms or public showers
- Minimize close contact with infected people
- Clip your fingernails and toenails short and keep them clean
- Wash your hands with soap and water after playing with pets

Should a person with ringworm stay home from school/daycare?

The child should be treated and return to school upon submitting proof that appropriate treatment has begun.

Where can I get more information?

Information about ringworm and other related health topics can be found at www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please visit www.doh.dc.gov or call (202) 442-9371.