



Ringworm Information Leaflet

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is a common skin infection that can affect the skin and nails. The infection, which is caused by a fungus, is called “ringworm” because it can cause an itchy, red, circular rash.

Approximately 40 different species of fungi can cause ringworm. The different types of ringworm are usually named for the location of the infection on the body. Areas of the body that can be affected by ringworm include: Feet (tinea pedis or “athlete’s foot”); Groin, inner thighs, or buttocks (tinea cruris or “jock itch”); Scalp (tinea capitis); Toenails or fingernails (tinea unguium); Other parts of the body such as arms or legs (tinea corporis)

Who gets ringworm infections?

Ringworm infections are very common. They can affect anyone, including people who are otherwise healthy. Ringworm infections may be more common among people with suppressed immune systems, people who use communal baths, and people who are involved in contact sports such as wrestling. Outbreaks of infections can occur in schools, households and institutional settings.

The ringworm infection that affects the scalp and hair, tinea capitis, is especially common among school-aged children and does not usually occur after puberty. Other kinds of ringworm infections tend to be more common in adolescents and adults.

How are ringworm infections spread?

Ringworm is contagious and can be spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with an infected person or by touching animals infected with ringworm. Objects such as clothing, bedding, towels, combs or brushes can also become contaminated and spread the infection.

What are the symptoms of ringworm infections?

These infections are usually itchy and lead to redness, scaling, or fissuring of the skin. Ringworm of the scalp usually begins as a small pimple which becomes larger in size leaving scaly patches of temporary baldness. Infected hairs become brittle and break off easily. With ringworm of the nails, the affected nails become thicker, discoloured and brittle. Ringworm of the body appears as flat, spreading ring-shaped areas. The edge is reddish and may be either dry and scaly or moist and crusted. As it spreads, the central area clears and appears normal. Ringworm of the foot appears as a scaling or cracking of the skin especially between the toes.



Ringworm on the back



Ringworm on the arm



Ringworm on the scalp





How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms typically appear between 4 and 14 days following exposure.

Does infection with ringworm make a person immune?

Since so many species of fungus can cause ringworm, infection with one species will not make a person immune to future infections.

Are there complications associated with Ringworm?

A fungal infection rarely spreads below the surface of the skin to cause serious illness. However, people with weak immune systems may find it difficult to get rid of the infection.

How can ringworm infections be treated?

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

- **Ringworm on the skin** can usually be treated with non-prescription antifungal creams, lotions, or powders applied to the skin for 2 to 4 weeks.
- **Ringworm on the scalp** (tinea capitis) usually needs to be treated with prescription antifungal medication taken by mouth for 1 to 3 months. Creams, lotions, or powders don’t work for ringworm on the scalp.

Measures to take if you are diagnosed with ringworm

If you are confirmed or your child is confirmed as having ringworm then:

- Keep the affected area clean and dry.
- To prevent passing on the infection, do not share towels. Wash towels, sheets and clothes frequently. Clean your shower or bath well after use. Try not to scratch the rash, as this may spread the fungus to other areas of your body.
- Where possible, you should throw out or disinfect (with bleach) objects that may be contaminated with fungal spores - for example, hats, combs, pillows, blankets and scissors. This aims to prevent re-infection after treatment and to prevent passing on the infection to others.
- It is not necessary to keep children off school. However, to ensure that the infection is not transmitted to others, they should carefully follow the recommended treatment.
- Monitor the scalps or skin of other children in the household. If there are any signs of ringworm then seek medical advice.
- If a pet is suspected of being the source of the fungal infection, then seek advice from a vet for treatment

If you would like further information, please contact the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Unit on 23266109, 23266122, 23266119





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