

RINGWORM

Ringworm is a fungal infection of the body, scalp, or feet. The scalp infection is most common in children, whereas infection of the feet is more common in adolescents and adults.

CAUSE Several different types of fungus. (It is not a worm.)

SYMPTOMS **Body** - Appears as flat, spreading, ring-shaped areas on the skin (lesions). The edge of the lesion may be dry and scaly or moist and crusted. As the lesion spreads outward, the center often becomes clear.

Scalp - May be hard to detect in the early stages. It often begins as a small scaly patch on the scalp and may progress to larger areas of scaling. Mild redness, swelling, itching, and pustules (pus-filled bumps) may occur. Infected hairs become brittle and break off easily.

Feet - (Also called athlete's foot.) Scaling or cracking of the skin, especially between the toes, or blisters containing thin, watery fluid may be seen. Itching is common. Serious problems can include bacterial skin infection (cellulitis) and fungal infections of the toenails.

SPREAD May occur by touching the lesions of infected persons or pets (usually dogs and cats); by sharing objects that touched the lesions of an infected person, (e.g., hats, caps, combs, brushes, towels, pillows, bedding, sofas, clothing, hair ribbons, barrettes); or having contact with skin scales containing fungi on shower stalls or floors, swimming pool decks, and locker room benches or floors.

INCUBATION **Body** - 4 to 10 days after exposure for symptoms to appear.

Scalp - 10 to 14 days.

Feet - Unknown

CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

Contagious as long as lesions are present. Contagiousness is reduced once treatment has begun.

EXCLUSION Childcare or School: Until treatment has been started or if the lesion cannot be covered. If on the scalp, until 24 hours after treatment has been started.

Any child with ringworm should not participate in gym, swimming, and other close contact activities that are likely to expose others until after treatment has begun or the lesions can be completely covered.

Sports: Follow athlete's healthcare provider's recommendations and the specific sports league rules for return to practice and competition.

DIAGNOSIS Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if they suspect ringworm in household members. Contact a veterinarian if you suspect a pet has ringworm.

TREATMENT **Body** - Antifungal ointments are used on skin lesions for 4 weeks. May require oral medication if lesions are extensive.

Scalp - Medications should be taken by mouth (oral) for 4 to 8 weeks. Antifungal shampoos may also be prescribed.

Foot - Antifungal ointments for 1 to 4 weeks. Oral medications may need to be taken for 6 to 8 weeks for severe or recurring problems.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Wash hands after touching lesions on humans and pets.
- Ensure lesions are completely covered.
- Wash combs and brushes in hot, soapy water, if used by the infected person.
- Check for signs of infection in all pets in the childcare and school setting. Have a veterinarian evaluate any pet with a skin infection or problem. If infection is present, treatment should be started as soon as possible. If the pet has ringworm, children should not be allowed to have contact with the pet until the rash has been treated and heals.
- DO NOT allow sharing of personal items such as brushes, combs, towels, bedding or pillows, clothing, hats, caps, hair ribbons, barrettes, and head gear (helmets).
- Have separate bedding and pillows for each child at the childcare.
- Wash bedding in hot, soapy water daily while a person is infected.
- Provide separate storage space for personal items for each child or staff member.
- Vacuum carpeted areas and upholstered furniture regularly.
- **Schools/Public facilities:**
 - Require shower shoes (e.g., flip-flops or water sandals) be worn in locker rooms or showers or on pool decks.
 - Exclude from using locker rooms, showers, or pools when active lesions are present if not covered by a waterproof bandage.
 - Disinfect showers and dressing rooms daily with an EPA-approved disinfectant.