

Ringworm (Tinea) Fact Sheet

Ringworm is an infection of the skin, hair, or nails caused by a fungus

It gets its name from its appearance on the skin, because the rash is often ring-shaped.

Other names for ringworm include tinea, dermatophytosis, athlete's foot (ringworm of the feet), and jock itch (ringworm of the groin). Despite the name, ringworm is not caused by a worm.

You can get ringworm from people, animals, or places such as:

- Touching a person who has ringworm.
- Using items such as clothes, towels, or hairbrushes that were used by someone with a ringworm infection.
- Coming into contact with the hair or dander of an infected animal.
- Using common areas like gyms, shower stalls, and floors if used by someone with ringworm.

Ringworm is easily diagnosed and treated

A doctor can do simple tests to determine whether a rash is ringworm. Treatment is usually an antifungal cream applied to the site of infection or antifungal pills taken by mouth.

If you have ringworm, you can avoid spreading it to others

- Follow your doctor's advice for proper treatment.
- Keep your skin, hair, and nails clean and dry.
- Do not share towels, clothing, or hairbrushes.
- Wash towels and clothing in hot water and soap to destroy the fungus.
- If you have athlete's foot stay away from common areas such as community pools and gyms until your infection goes away.

Ringworm can be prevented

- Keep common-use areas clean.
- Use a floor and bath cleaner that contains a fungus-killing (called "fungicidal") agent.
- Avoid physical contact with a person or animal that has ringworm.
- Do not share clothing, towels, hairbrushes, or other personal items.