

# IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

## RINGWORM

Ringworm is a skin infection caused by a fungus, not a worm. Ringworm can affect skin on your body, scalp, groin area (jock itch), or feet (athlete's foot).

### Symptoms

- Itchy, red, raised, scaly patches that may blister and ooze. The patches often have sharply-defined edges. They are often redder around the outside with normal skin tone in the center, like a ring. Your skin may also appear unusually dark or light.
- There may be several patches of ringworm on the skin at once.
- If nails are infected, they become discolored, thick, and even crumble.
- Ringworm on the scalp usually makes a bald patch of scaly skin.

### Transmission

- Ringworm is contagious. It can be passed from one person to the next by direct skin-to-skin contact or by touching contaminated items such as combs, unwashed clothing, and surfaces.
- Ringworm is common among children, but it may affect people of all ages.
- Many kinds of animals can also carry ringworm. People can get the infection from direct contact with an infected animal's skin or hair.
- The fungi that cause ringworm thrive in warm, moist areas. Ringworm is more likely when you have frequent wetness (such as from sweating) and minor injuries to your skin, scalp, or nails.

### Treatment

- Ringworm usually responds well to self-care within 4 weeks without having to see a doctor. Keep your skin clean and dry and apply an over-the-counter antifungal or drying powder, lotion, or cream. Choose one that contains miconazole, clotrimazole, or similar ingredients. Wash sheets and nightclothes every day while infected.
- A severe or persistent infection may require treatment by a doctor. Antifungal pills may be given and are necessary if your hair is infected. Prescription antifungal skin medications are stronger than over-the-counter products and may be needed.
- Infected pets also should be treated.
- Call your doctor if you have a fever or if the area becomes swollen, warm, bright red, or has pus. These are signs of a serious bacterial infection, which can result from scratching.

### Prevention

- Keep your skin and feet clean and dry. Wear sandals or shoes at gyms, lockers, and pools.
- Shampoo regularly, especially after haircuts. Do not share clothing, towels, hairbrushes, combs, headgear, or other personal care items. Clean and dry these items after use.
- Avoid touching pets with bald spots.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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