

What is ringworm?

- Ringworm is a skin infection that can affect any part of the body. It usually affects the skin, nails, or scalp.
- Ringworm of the scalp is called tinea capitis.
- Ringworm of the skin and nails is called tinea corporis.
- Ringworm of the groin is called tinea cruris or jock itch.
- Ringworm of the feet is called tinea pedis or athlete's foot.

What causes ringworm?

- Ringworm is caused by a fungus, not a worm.

Who can get ringworm?

- Anyone of any age can get ringworm. It is most common in children ages 3-9.
- People, animals, and rodents can get ringworm. It can also be found in soil.
- Swimmers, children in day care, and people with weak immune systems (from cancer, HIV, etc.) are at greater risk.
- It is possible to get ringworm more than once.

What are the symptoms of ringworm?

- Ringworm of the skin causes itching, redness of the skin, and circular sores. The sores usually have a red edge and a clear center. Rings may form around sores.
- Skin could become lighter or darker on the sides of the face, the neck, back, and chest. This is most common in teens and young adults.
- Ringworm of the scalp may start like a pimple and then become patchy, flaky, or scaly. It can cause hair loss or cause hair to break in stubbles.
- Ringworm can also affect the area under men's beards.
- Ringworm of the nails may affect 1 or more nails on the hands or feet.
- Nails may become thick, white, and break easily.
- The area between the toes may itch, burn, and become red.
- Jock itch causes patches of itchy areas on the upper thigh and lower stomach, but not on the penis or scrotum.

Is ringworm contagious?

- Yes. Ringworm is contagious.
- It can be spread by direct contact with an infected person, pet, or surface.
- It can be spread by sharing clothing, brushes, shoes, towels, toys (such as stuffed animals) and other items with an infected person.
- Ringworm (athlete's foot) can spread by touching an infected surface (in public showers, on gym mats, pool decks, carpets, and couches).

How is ringworm treated?

- The doctor may take a test to make sure your child has a fungal infection.
- The doctor will probably recommend an antifungal cream or shampoo.
- Keep the skin clean and dry. Use a drying powder if needed.
- In some cases, oral medication (by mouth) may be helpful.

- Do not scratch the sores.
- Pets who have ringworm should be treated by a veterinarian.

How long does ringworm last?

- With treatment, symptoms usually get better within 4 weeks.
- Some cases may need longer treatment.

How can ringworm be prevented?

- Practice good hygiene. Keep skin clean and dry.
- Wear clean clothes every day.
- Put on clean socks after exercising.
- Your child is more likely to be infected if he has a cut or scratch. Clean and disinfect wounds as soon as possible.
- An infected person's clothing, brush, and other items should be washed after use.
- Wear sandals in public showers or near pools.

When should I call the doctor?

- Call the doctor if your child has a red sore on his skin that itches.
- Call the doctor if symptoms do not improve after 7 days of treatment.
- Call the doctor if symptoms last for more than 4 weeks.
- Call the doctor if the area near the patch becomes red, warm, tender, or swollen.
- Call the doctor if your child has a fever with his rash.
- Call the doctor if you have questions or concerns.

Quick Answers

- Ringworm is a skin infection that usually affects the skin, nails, or scalp.
- Ringworm is caused by a fungus.
- Anyone of any age can get ringworm. It is most common in children.
- Ringworm causes itching, redness of the skin, and circular sores.
- It can be spread by contact with an infected person, pet, soil, or items.
- Ringworm is usually treated with cream, shampoo, or oral medication.
- Symptoms usually get better within 4 weeks of treatment.
- Keep body and clothes clean and dry to help prevent infection.
- Call the doctor if your child has a rash or other symptoms of ringworm.

References

- Hait E M.D. Ringworm. MedlinePlus. 2001 July 30 (cited 2001 October 3). Available from: URL: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001439.htm>
- Health Square. Ringworm of the Body. (cited 2001 October 3). Available from: URL: <http://www.healthsquare.com/mc/fgmc1217.htm>
- Hyde P M.D. Ringworm. KidsHealth. 2001 April (cited 2001 October 3). Available from: URL: http://www.kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=207&cat_id=&article_set=21944
- Intellihealth. Ringworm (Tinea) 2001 March 30 (cited 2001 October 3). Available from: URL: <http://www.intelihealth.com/IH/ihtIH/WSIHW000/20722/10628.html>