

Ringworm Fact Sheet

What is it?

Ringworm is a common skin infection caused by a fungus, not a worm. It's called "ringworm" because the rash often appears in a ring shape. It typically has a red color and causes itching and anyone can get ringworm.



How does it spread?

The fungi that cause ringworm can live on skin and in the environment. There are three main ways ringworm can spread:

- From skin-to-skin contact with a person who has ringworm.
- From touching an animal that has ringworm.
- From contact with surfaces or objects that ringworm germs are living on. This could be walking barefoot in a locker room or sharing a towel with someone who has ringworm.



How do I know if I have it?

Ringworm can affect skin on almost any part of the body. The symptoms of ringworm depend on which part of the body is infected, but they include:

- Itchy skin
- Ring-shaped rash
- Red, scaly, cracked skin
- Hair loss

You can get symptoms between 4 and 14 days after the skin comes in contact with the fungi that cause ringworm.



How can I protect myself?

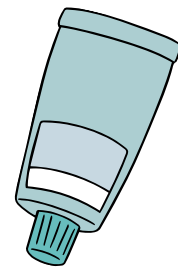
- Keep your skin clean and dry.
- Wear shoes that allow airflow around your feet.
- **Do not** walk barefoot in locker rooms or public showers.
- Change your socks and underwear at least once a day.
- **Do not** share clothing, towels, sheets, or sports gear.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after playing with pets.



How should I take care of myself or someone who has Ringworm?

The treatment for ringworm depends on its location on the body and how serious the infection is.

- **Ringworm on the skin** can be treated with over-the-counter antifungal creams, lotions, or powders applied to the skin for 2 to 4 weeks.
- **Ringworm on the scalp** needs to be treated with antifungal medicine ordered by your doctor. This medicine will be taken by mouth for 1 to 3 months. Creams, lotions, or powders do not work for ringworm on the scalp.



When should I call a doctor?

You should contact your doctor if:

- Your skin infection gets worse or does not go away after using over-the-counter medicines.
- You or your child has ringworm on the scalp. Ringworm on the scalp needs to be treated with antifungal medicine ordered by your doctor.



To learn more, visit the Ringworm webpage at www.cdc.gov.