

Ringworm Fact Sheet



What is ringworm?

Ringworm is a fungal infection that may affect the body (skin), feet, or scalp.

What are the signs and symptoms of ringworm?

Signs and symptoms depend on the site of infection. On the skin, there will be circular patches with raised edges. These patches are often red. On the feet, there is cracking and peeling of skin between the toes. On the scalp, there may be patchy areas of scaling with or without hair loss or redness and scaling of scalp with broken hairs or hair loss.

How is it spread?

Ringworm is spread by contact with infected humans or animals (cats and dogs) or contact with contaminated surfaces or objects such as combs, bedding, clothing and towels. Spores from the fungus that causes ringworm can be found on objects and spread the infection.

How do you keep ringworm from spreading?

Early treatment of infected people prevents spread. Families and household members should also be examined as the infection is mildly contagious. Do not share combs, hairbrushes, or towels. Cover skin lesions.

Ringworm in schools:

Teachers/caregivers need to report the infection to the staff member who makes decisions regarding ill children. Do not permit sharing of helmets, hats, clothing, bedding or towels. The child should be excluded from school at the end of the day and may be readmitted once appropriate treatment is started.

Treatment:

A child with ringworm of the skin is infectious if the fungus is present in the lesion. The fungus is no longer present once the lesion starts to shrink. A physician may recommend an over the counter treatment or provide a prescription. Once a person is treated with medication by mouth, they are no longer considered infectious.

Exclusion:

Children with ringworm should be excluded at the end of the day and may be readmitted once treatment is started. If a child is being treated with lotion, cream, or spray, it may be necessary to keep the lesions covered until they begin to shrink. It is important to finish the course of medication as instructed by the physician to prevent reinfection.