

Ringworm

(Fungal Infections)

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is a fungal infection of the skin. It can be found on the body, the scalp and beard, feet, groin, perineal region and nails.

Who gets ringworm?

Tinea corporis (body): All ages susceptible.

Tinea capitis (scalp and beard): All ages susceptible, with children below the age of puberty especially susceptible to *M. canis* (infected dogs and cats).

Tinea pedis (feet, athletes foot): All ages. Adults more often, males more than females.

Tinea unguium (nails): All ages susceptible. Injury to a nail predisposes to this infection.

How is ringworm spread?

Those of the body, groin and feet: Contact with skin lesions of infected people, lesions of animals, contaminated floors, shower stalls, benches or similar articles used by infected people.

Of the scalp or beard: Direct skin-to-skin or indirect contact especially from combs, hairbrushes, backs of theater seats, barber clippers, clothing and hats.

Of the nails: Direct contact with skin and nail lesions of infected person or indirect contact with floor or shower stalls. Low rate of transmission, even to close contacts.

What are the symptoms of ringworm?

Body: Rash is small, flat, ring shaped that becomes progressively larger. The circular border is elevated and can be scaly and dry or moist and crusted. The center of circle starts to heal as area becomes larger. Mild itching, pain or scaling.

Scalp and beard: May have mousy odor. Scaly circular patches spread outward. May have brittle hair over lesion, causing hair to break off easily and leave patches of baldness. Itches. Occasionally the lesions are raised and pus-like.

Feet: Cracking or scaling between the toes. Blister-like lesions. May involve one or both feet.

Groin or perineal region: Upper inner thigh or scrotum in males involved. Spreads outward in flat, ring-shaped lesions like body ringworm. There is much itching during healing.

Nails: Nail gradually thickens, becoming discolored and brittle. Excessive cheese-like material forms under nail. Nail becomes chalky and crumbles.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

Body and groin area: four to 10 days. Scalp and beard: 10 to 14 days. Feet and nails: unknown.

Continued on back page



When and for how long is a person able to spread ringworm?

As long as lesions are present.

Does past infection with ringworm make a person immune?

All forms of ringworm can have repeated attacks except of the scalp and beard, in which another infection is rare.

What complications can happen from ringworm?

A secondary infection is possible.

What is the treatment for ringworm?

Thorough bathing with soap and water, removal of scales and crusts and application of effective ointment or cream that kills fungus may be all that is needed. If the condition worsens or lasts for two weeks, a prescription medication is available from your health-care provider.

What can be done to control the spread of ringworm?

While under treatment, infected people should be excluded from gymnasiums, swimming pools and activities likely to expose others. Frequently launder clothing with hot water or use agents that kill fungus. Examine school and household contacts, household pets and farm animals. General cleanliness in showers and dressing rooms with repeated washing of benches, frequent hosing and rapid draining of shower rooms is helpful. Fungus-killing agents such as cresol should be used as a disinfectant. Do not share personal care items.

