

Infections - fungal



Tinea (Ringworm & Athlete's Foot)

Important Points

Ringworm

- Can be passed from child to child and from pets to children
- Can be treated with antifungal creams and tablets

Athlete's Foot

- Dry feet well after bathing
- Avoid feet remaining hot and damp
- Reduce time spent wearing sneakers/runners
- Change sweaty socks and shoes after sport
- Wear cotton or woollen socks
- Wear sandals or shoes that don't make feet hot and sweaty

What is it?

Tinea is a common infection of the skin due to a fungus. Tinea on the scalp and body is called ringworm and tinea on the feet is known as athlete's foot. It is very uncommon in children under the age of two years.

Where does it occur?

In the scalp, tinea appears as small patches of hair loss with some scaling. On the body it can look like ringworm with a clear centre and a red and scaling ring around the outside. On pigmented skin this may be more purple or brown than red. On the feet, it can cause itch and splitting between the toes or just a small amount of redness or brown discolouration and scaling on the sole. When tinea occurs in the nails there may be yellow or white colour change in the nail, lifting up at the end of the nail and the development of crusting underneath it.

What causes it?

Tinea is an infection due to a fungus. The fungus can be transmitted from one child to another, particularly the type that causes the classical ringworm on the body or in the scalp. This type of tinea can also be transmitted from kittens and puppies. There is a different fungus causing tinea in the feet. This is

frequently present in and around shower basins, swimming pools or other communal bathing areas. Young children can pick up tinea in their feet at home from parents or older siblings who have tinea. Shoes such as runners/sneakers cause feet to become warm and sweaty which makes tinea more likely. Tinea in the toenails accompanies tinea in the feet.

How is it prevented & treated?

Ringworm

Tinea in the scalp and on the body is treated with antifungal antibiotics prescribed by a doctor. Antifungal creams available from the chemist may also be used. If your child has ringworm, pets such as kittens and puppies should be examined by a vet.

Athlete's Foot

Tinea in the feet usually gets better using antifungal creams or lotions available from the pharmacist. Carefully drying the skin of the feet and between the toes after showering or swimming may prevent infection. Reduce the time spent wearing sneakers/runners. Absorbent socks containing wool or cotton are best to reduce the warm sweaty conditions, which increases the risk of tinea infection in the feet. Tinea in the nails requires treatment with special antifungal tablets prescribed by a doctor.

Further Information

Your Maternal and Child Health nurse.

Your pharmacist.

Your family doctor.

A dermatologist.