



Ringworm

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is a skin infection caused by a fungus that can affect the scalp, skin, fingers, toe nails or foot. Ringworm occurs when a type of fungus called tinea grows and multiplies on your skin. It is called 'ringworm' because it can cause a circular rash.

Who gets ringworm?

Anyone can get ringworm. Children may be more at risk for certain types, such as ringworm of the scalp.

What are the symptoms of ringworm?

Symptoms of ringworm include:-

- Itchy, red, raised, scaly patches that may blister and ooze.
- The patches tend to have sharply-defined edges.
- Red patches are often redder around the outside with normal skin tone in the center. This may look like a ring.
- If the ringworm affects your hair, you may have bald patches.

How is ringworm diagnosed?

Most of the time your health care provider can diagnose ringworm by looking at the affected skin and asking questions about your symptoms.

How is ringworm treated?

Treatment depends on its location on the body. Some forms can be treated with non-prescription ("over-the-counter") medication, but other forms may require treatment with prescription antifungal medication.

How can I prevent and avoid spreading ringworm?

- Follow your doctor's advice for proper treatment.
- Keep your skin, hair and nails clean and dry.
- Don't wear clothing that rubs against and irritates the area.
- Avoid sharing towels, clothing, hairbrushes or personal items.
- Wash sheets and nightclothes every day while you are infected.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after playing with pets.
- If you have athlete's foot, stay away from common areas such as pools and gyms until your infection goes away.
- Keep common areas clean.
- Minimize contact with infected people or animals.

Can my child attend school?

Exclusion from school is not usually required. Treatment is required and it is advisable to cover the affected area with a bandage before returning to school.

Adapted from:
District of Columbia Dept of Health, Ringworm fact sheet 2016
(www.doh.dc.gov)
Updated: Feb 2017.