

RINGWORM (TINEA)

What is Ringworm?

Ringworm is a fungus that affects different parts of the body such as scalp, groin (jock itch), toe nails and feet (Athlete's Foot).

How is it spread?

Ringworm is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact or indirectly from furniture, hair equipment, toilet articles, clothing and even pets (cats and dogs). Common areas like gyms, shower stalls, floors, and even the soil harbor the fungus.

What are the signs and symptoms?

A small, circular sore develops on the scalp and spreads leaving scaly patches or temporary baldness. Infected hairs become brittle and break off easily. Circular patches with a characteristic raised edge may develop on the hairless body parts. Athlete's Foot is characterized by itchy, scaly, soggy skin between the toes. Swelling and/or open sores may develop around the toes. If the nail is diseased, it will be humped, cracked, broken and appear dark and dirty. There is no pain or itch.

What is the incubation period and how long is it communicable?

Ringworm of the scalp has an incubation period of 10 to 14 days. The incubation period for other types of ringworm is 4-10 days. All types are communicable for as long as an active lesion is present.

How can Ringworm be prevented?

Avoiding direct skin contact with infected persons or animals can prevent ringworm. Athlete's Foot can be prevented by:

- Wearing shoes that are not too tight.
- Bathing your feet daily and scrubbing away loose, dead skin.
- Wearing socks and putting on clean ones daily.
- Using talcum powder to keep your shoes and feet dry.
- Changing or alternating shoes daily so they can dry out.
- Wearing shower shoes when using public showers

What should I do about it?

Persons who have these symptoms should see their physicians. Systemic and topical medications may be used. Contaminated articles and floors need to be disinfected.

Children and adults should be excluded from school/childcare center or work until 24 hours after the antifungal treatment is initiated. When readmitted to the facility, lesions must remain covered. It is necessary to wear a cap for scalp ringworm and individuals with athlete's foot should not be allowed to walk barefoot. Individuals with any form of ringworm should NOT use swimming pools.

Clusters of two or more persons are considered a **reportable disease** to the Santa Rosa County Health Department (SRCHD).

For more information, please contact the SRCHD at 850-983-5200.

