

Tinea

(Ringworm)

Tinea is a common skin infection caused by a fungus. It most often affects warm, moist areas of skin and commonly occurs between the toes and around the groin. It can also affect other body areas, including the scalp and nails. Most cases of tinea can be effectively treated with medicines available from a pharmacist.

Tinea is sometimes called 'ringworm', even though it has nothing to do with worms and the skin rash is not always ring-shaped. Tinea spreads from person to person directly through skin-to-skin contact, or indirectly through towels, clothes, shoes, bedding, mats and floors. People can also catch it from animals with tinea (e.g. cats, dogs, horses, mice, guinea pigs).

Signs and symptoms

Foot tinea (athlete's foot)

Foot tinea most often occurs in the skin between the toes. The infected skin:

- Appears wet or soggy with peeling and cracks
- May be white or red
- Is often itchy, may burn or sting
- May have an unpleasant smell.



Tinea may also cause itching, scaling, peeling and cracking on other parts of the foot. Small fluid-filled blisters may form in the affected area.

Groin tinea (jock itch)

- Itchy, burning, red rash on the inner thighs. It may also occur on the buttocks, genitals and anal area. The rash often has raised, scaly edges and may have a pale centre.
- Small fluid filled blisters may form in rash area.

Tinea on other body areas

- Itchy, scaly, often red and often circular patch (or patches) on the skin. The patch often has raised scaly edges and may have a pale centre. Small fluid-filled blisters may form in the patch.
- Tinea on the scalp may look like severe dandruff, but usually causes itchy, red, scaly patches with hair loss (the hairs break off leaving a bald patch).
- Nails infected with tinea can become white, grey or yellow and thick, deformed and crumbly. Toenails get infected more often than fingernails.

Risks

Tinea infection on any body area is more likely to develop if you:

- Live or work in hot, humid climates
- Perspire a lot
- Do not dry skin well after bathing
- Work with animals
- Are a child or spend time with children
- Have diabetes
- Have a weakened immune system.

Foot tinea is more likely to develop if you:

- Wear synthetic (e.g. nylon, acrylic) socks that make feet sweat
- Go barefoot in public showers and around pools
- Wear tightly fitting shoes, or plastic or rubber shoes (e.g. gum boots)

- Have sweaty feet
- Don't wash and dry between toes properly.

Foot tinea is easily and commonly caught from infected scales of skin left around showers, change rooms, swimming pools and spas.

Groin tinea is more likely to develop if you:

- Perspire a lot
- Are overweight
- Are male.

Medicines

Tinea infections may be effectively treated with non-prescription antifungal creams, gels, lotions, powders, solutions and sprays available from a pharmacist.

- Read and follow the product instructions carefully.
- It is important to continue regular treatment for as long as instructed. For example, some treatments need to be continued for 2 weeks after a tinea skin rash has cleared. Ask a pharmacist for advice.
- Antifungal powder dusted inside shoes and socks can help treat foot tinea and prevent re-infection.
- To stop tinea infection spreading, it is important to thoroughly wash hands and scrub under nails after applying treatments.

A severe tinea infection, or nail or scalp tinea, may need treatment with antifungal tablets, which must be prescribed by a doctor.

Self care

To protect against tinea infection:

- Do not share towels, shoes, socks, underwear, hats or hair brushes and combs
- Wash socks, underwear, towels and bathmats in hot water and detergent, or use a special antifungal laundry product. Ask your pharmacist
- While infected, avoid transferring the tinea to another body area. Use a separate, fresh towel to dry the infected area and wash hands well after touching the infected area
- Check family animals for tinea. On animals it looks like a patch of skin with fur missing – ask a vet.

Foot tinea

- Wash and dry feet well every day. Gently rub the skin between the toes with a cotton bud to remove dead skin.
- Inspect your feet every day and keep them clean and dry, especially between the toes.
- Go barefoot or wear sandals to air feet, especially in warm, humid weather.
- Wear socks made of a natural fibre (cotton or wool) or a fibre that draws moisture away from your skin. Change socks daily, or more regularly in hot weather.
- Allow sweaty shoes to dry out before wearing them again.

Important

Consult a doctor or pharmacist if:

- A rash starts to ooze, weep or smell
- A rash does not get better with treatment
- Hair is being lost from tinea on the scalp
- Nails are infected – look yellow, thick and crumbly
- You also have diabetes, poor circulation or a weakened immune system.

A doctor may scrape some skin or nail to test for tinea. Do not put anything on the skin or nail before the scraping is taken as it may interfere with the test.

- Wear sandals or thongs around public showers and pools.
- Use an antiperspirant product if your feet sweat a lot – ask your pharmacist.
- Clean the base of the shower or bath with disinfectant, so you don't re-infect yourself and others.

Groin tinea

- Wear loose, cotton clothing – boxer shorts allow more airflow and reduce rubbing.
- Dry skin carefully after showering. A dusting powder may help.
- Wash and dry skin after physical activity or if sweaty.

For more information

New Zealand Dermatological Society Inc

Website: www.dermnetnz.org

Healthdirect Australia

Phone: 1800 022 222

Website: www.healthinsite.gov.au

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)

Your pharmacist can advise on CMI leaflets.

National Prescribing Service (NPS) Medicines Information

Phone: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)

Website: www.nps.org.au

The Poisons Information Centre

In case of poisoning phone 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

*Pharmacists are medicines experts.
Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.*

Related fact cards

- » *Eczema and Dermatitis*
- » *Diabetes Type 1*
- » *Diabetes Type 2*
- » *Hair Loss*
- » *Nappy Rash*
- » *Thrush*

Canesten®

If symptoms persist, see your healthcare professional. Your pharmacist's advice is required. Canesten is not indicated for nail infection. Canesten Anti-fungal cream.

Sponsored by:



Your Self Care Pharmacy: