

Ringworm

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are being provided with this fact sheet:

- Because you or your child may have been exposed to ringworm.
- For informational purposes only.

General Information About Ringworm

What is ringworm?

- Ringworm is caused by a fungus called *Microsporum canis*.
- It is a common fungal infection that can affect the skin on the body, feet, or scalp. When it is on the feet, it is called “Athlete’s Foot”.
- Despite its name, it has nothing to do with worms. The word “ring” in the name comes from the circular rash that is shaped like a ring.

Who can get it?

- Anyone can get ringworm.
- Ringworm of the scalp is most common in children 3 to 9 years.

What are the symptoms?

- Ringworm on the body begins as a small, round, red spot on the skin that grows in size.
 - As it grows from the size of a pea to the size of a dime, the center clears and it starts to look like a ring.
 - The edges of the ring are red and can be dry and scaly or wet and crusty.
 - The rash is usually red and itchy.
- When ringworm is on the scalp:
 - infected hairs may break off easily;
 - a bald patch of scaly skin can also develop;
 - yellowish crusty areas sometimes develop.
- When it is on the feet, there is cracking or peeling of the skin between the toes.

How is it spread?

- The fungus that causes ringworm can spread:
 - when someone touches the rash of a person who has ringworm.
 - by touching surfaces that are damp, like public showers or locker room floors, that have the fungus on them.
 - by sharing personal items, such as combs, hats, clothes, or towels that the person with ringworm has used.
 - or after touching dogs, cats, and other animals that have ringworm.
 - Although it is not common, it can also spread after touching soil that contains the fungus.

How Do I Know If My Child Has Ringworm?

If your child has symptoms of ringworm, they should be seen by a healthcare provider.

- A healthcare provider will often diagnose ringworm based on the appearance of the skin.
- The diagnosis may be confirmed by taking scrapings from the skin and looking at them under a microscope or by sending a sample to a lab to be tested.

If you have additional questions or are concerned your child might have ringworm, contact your healthcare provider. This fact sheet provides general information only.

What If My Child Has Ringworm?

Notify your child care provider or preschool immediately if your child has ringworm.

How is ringworm treated?

- Ringworm treatments are available for purchase over-the-counter and by prescription. **Consult with your health care provider for treatment recommendations.**
- It can take several weeks for a ringworm infection to clear even with treatment.
- Stopping treatment too soon can cause ringworm to return and make it harder to treat, so it is important to follow the directions on the packaging or prescription label.

How can I help prevent ringworm from spreading?

- Keep the infected area covered with bandages or clothing.
 - Keep skin clean and dry.
 - Because the fungus can survive on objects for long periods of time, sometimes up to 18 months, it is important to:
 - not walk barefoot in areas like locker rooms or public showers. Instead, wear sandals or shoes at gyms, locker rooms, and pools.
 - clean and disinfect household surfaces.
 - vacuum the home; this helps remove pet hair and flakes of skin that might be infected.
 - wash sheets, clothes, and pajamas every day. Wash in hot water and dry in the dryer on a “hot” setting.
 - do not share clothing, towels, pillows, hairbrushes, hats, or other personal items with people who have ringworm.
 - Keep rooms well ventilated. Open windows regularly.
 - Wash hands well after touching pets or animals. Take pets who may have a ringworm infection to a veterinarian.
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Does My Child Need to Stay Home from Child Care?

Yes. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children with ringworm can return to child care after they have started treatment.

Please follow your child care program’s sickness policy.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics

- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 6th Edition. Pages 161-1562

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

- Ringworm website: <https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/ringworm/index.html>