

MONROE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

DISEASE CONTROL UNIT 753-5164

Ringworm **(tinea capitis-scalp; tinea pedis-feet; tinea corporis-body)**

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is a skin infection caused by a fungus that can affect the scalp, skin, fingers, toenails or foot. Depending on where it occurs it may be called ringworm, jock itch or athlete's foot.

Who gets ringworm?

Anyone can get ringworm. Children may be more susceptible to certain varieties while adults may be more affected with other varieties.

How are ringworm infections spread?

Transmission of these fungal agents can occur by direct skin-to-skin contact with infected people or pets, or indirectly by contact with items such as barber clippers, hair from infected people, shower stalls or floors that have been contaminated.

What are the symptoms of ringworm infections?

Ringworm of the scalp usually begins as a small pimple, which becomes larger in size leaving scaly patches of temporary baldness. Infected hairs become brittle and break off easily. Yellowish cup like crusty areas are also a possible symptom of ringworm of the scalp. With ringworm of the nails, the affected nails become thicker discolored and brittle. The nail may become chalky and disintegrate. Ringworm of the body appears as flat, spreading ring-shaped areas. The edge is reddish and may be either dry and scaly or moist and crusted. As it spreads, the center area clears and appears normal. Ringworm of the foot appears as a scaling or cracking of the skin especially between the toes.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The incubation period is unknown for most of these agents, however ringworm of the scalp is usually seen 10 to 14 days after contact and ringworm of the body is seen four to 10 days after initial contact.

Does infection with ringworm make a person immune?

Since so many species of fungus can cause ringworm, infection with one species will not make a person immune to future infections.

What is the treatment for ringworm infections?

Your doctor may prescribe an oral fungicidal medication or fungicidal ointments that can be applied directly to the affected areas.

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How long is a person contagious?

A person is contagious for as long as the lesions are present.

What can be done to prevent the spread of ringworm?

1. Towels, hats and clothing of the infected individual should not be shared with others.
2. Young children who are infected should minimize close contact with other children until effectively treated.
3. General cleanliness in showers and dressing rooms of gymnasiums, including frequent hosing and rapid draining of showers would help eliminate transmission of ringworm.
4. When multiple cases occur, seek advice from your local health department.