

UAB Health Education

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

TINEA (RINGWORM)



Ringworm is not actually caused by a worm. It is a fungal skin infection that can occur in anyone but is most common in children. It has different names depending on where the skin is affected. For example, ringworm on the feet is called athlete's foot (tinea pedis), and an infection in the inner thighs, groin or buttocks is called jock itch (tinea cruris). Ringworm is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with an infected person or animal. It can also be spread through contaminated surfaces in warm, moist environments.

DIAGNOSIS

Your provider will evaluate your exposure history and examine your skin. He/she may also take a scraping from the affected area to examine under the microscope for evidence of fungus.

TREATMENT

Ringworm of the skin can be treated with over-the-counter medications, such as antifungal lotions, cream, or ointment, like clotrimazole (Lotrimin) or terbinafine (Lamisil). These should be applied for 2-4 weeks. If you have ringworm on your head or under your finger/toenails, you will need to use a prescription antifungal medication for 1-3 months. Call Student Health Services if the ringworm is not improving with medications.

PREVENTION

- Keep your skin clean and dry.
- Shower right after playing a contact sport or swimming in a public pool.
- Do not go barefoot in public areas such as bathrooms, locker rooms or showers.
- Do not share sports gear such as helmets or shoes.
- Avoid infected animals. This infection often looks like a patch of skin where the hair is missing.

RESOURCES

FamilyDoctor.org <https://familydoctor.org/condition/ringworm/>

Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/ringworm-body/symptoms-causes/syc-20353780>

SYMPTOMS

- Scaly, ring-shaped area with clearer skin in middle
- Can sometimes look like tiny bumps or blisters
- Itchy, flaking skin
- Loss of hair at site of rash

RISK FACTORS

- Close physical contact with infected people
- Warm, moist environments
- Participating in sports with skin-to-skin contact, such as wrestling
- Wearing tight, restrictive clothing