

TINEA

(Ringworm)

Tinea is a fungal infection that grows best on warm, moist skin. The usual sites are warm, sweaty areas of the body, such as between the toes, beneath the breasts and in the groin. Tinea is sometimes called 'ringworm', which is misleading as it has nothing to do with worms. Tinea can be treated with the help of a pharmacist.

Tinea is contagious, and is spread from person to person through skin-to-skin contact, or indirectly through towels, clothes and floors. It is also spread through animals such as cats, dogs, horses or cattle, or from soil, although this is rare.

Signs and symptoms

Tinea of the feet (athlete's foot, tinea pedis)

- Skin on feet appears soft and whitish, often with cracks and redness
- Seen especially between the toes
- Often itchy, and may burn and sting
- May have an unpleasant smell
- May have small fluid-filled blisters.

Tinea of the groin - jock itch

- Itchy, red rash on the inner thighs, usually with scaly edges, clearing in the centre; sometimes occurs in the pubic area and between the buttocks
- Small fluid filled blisters in rash area.

Tinea can also affect the other areas including the scalp, body and nails, particularly the toenails.

- Slightly raised, itchy red patch on body, often round with a scaly edge and clearing centre
- Small fluid-filled blisters in the patch
- On the scalp, may appear as scaly patches with broken hairs.

Risks

Tinea is more likely to occur if you:

- Live or work in hot, humid climates
- Have diabetes
- Have a health condition that affects your immune system or you are HIV positive
- Work with animals
- Are a child or spend time with children.

Tinea of the feet is more likely to occur if you:

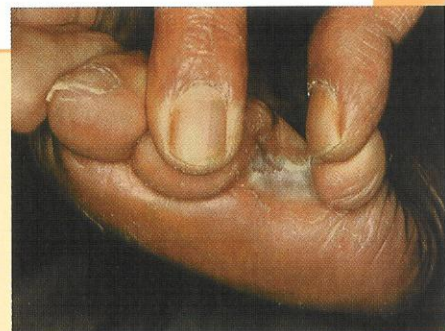
- Wear nylon or acrylic socks
- Walk barefoot in public showers
- Wear tightly fitting shoes or plastic or rubber shoes (gum boots/bushwalking shoes)
- Have sweaty feet

IMPORTANT

Some rashes look like tinea but are not. See a doctor if:

- The rash is red, inflamed or starts to ooze, weep or smell
- Nails become infected – look yellow, thick and crumbly
- The rash does not get better with treatment
- You also have diabetes or circulation problems
- You are unsure if your rash is tinea
- Hair is being lost from a tinea on the scalp.

A doctor may scrape some skin to check under a microscope. Do not put anything on the skin before the scraping is taken as this can make it hard for a doctor to find out what is causing the rash.



- Don't wash and dry between your toes properly.

Tinea of the feet can be picked up easily from infected scales of skin dropped on the floors of showers, change rooms and around swimming pools and spas.

Tinea of the groin is more likely if you:

- Perspire a lot
- Are overweight
- Are male.

Medicines

- Apply an antifungal product, as directed, and try not to miss any applications.
- It usually takes 3-4 weeks of treatment to get rid of tinea. There is also a cream that may only require a week of treatment. Discuss which product is best for you with a pharmacist.
- While the tinea may appear to clear up after a week or so, there may still be enough of the fungus in the skin for the tinea to come back. Continue to treat the area for two weeks after signs or symptoms of tinea have gone.
- To help treat tinea pedis and prevent reinfection, dust lightly inside all shoes with anti-fungal powder. Ask a pharmacist.
- You may need oral antifungal medicine if you have severe tinea or if your nails get infected. Ask a doctor.
- Wash hands and scrub under nails thoroughly after treatments to stop infection spreading.

Self care

Tinea of the feet

- Wash feet well every day. Gently rub the skin between the toes with a cotton bud to remove dead skin.

- Use a separate, fresh towel to dry your feet and between your toes. Dry your feet last.
- Go barefoot or wear sandals to air feet, especially in warm, humid weather.
- Wear socks made of 100% cotton or wool — they soak up moisture. Change socks daily, or more regularly in hot weather.
- Allow sweaty shoes to dry out before wearing again.
- Clean the base of the shower or bath with bleach after use so you don't re-infect yourself and others.
- Wear sandals or thongs around the pool or in public showers.
- Look at your feet every day and keep them clean and dry, especially between the toes.
- Use an antiperspirant product if your feet sweat a lot. Products are also available to reduce chafing. Ask your pharmacist.
- Do not borrow other people's shoes.

Tinea of the groin

- Wear loose, cotton clothing – boxer shorts allow more airflow, and reduce chafing.
- Dry skin carefully after showering.
- Wash and dry skin after physical activity or if sweaty.

Other relevant fact cards:

- Skin Rash
- Diabetes
- Hair Loss

Contact:

A doctor – listed under 'medical practitioners' in the yellow pages of the phone book

A Self Care pharmacist. To find: ph. (02) 6283 4777

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

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

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

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