



Find out more

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Fungal skin infection

Information for patients

Introduction

Athlete's foot is a rash caused by a fungus that usually appears between the toes.

The medical name for athlete's foot is tinea pedis.

The affected skin may be itchy, red, scaly, dry, cracked or blistered.

It's not usually serious, but should be treated to stop it spreading to other parts of the body or other people.

Treatment usually involves pharmacy-bought creams, sprays or liquids and good foot hygiene.

Signs and symptoms

Athlete's foot most commonly affects the skin between the toes or on the bottom of the feet. Affected areas of skin may be:

- dry, red, scaly and flaky
- white, soggy and cracked
- itchy
- sore
- covered in small blisters

The infection can spread around your foot and to your toenails.

Scratching the infected skin and then touching other parts of your body can also spread the infection.

Treatment

Athlete's foot is unlikely to get better on its own. It can usually be treated using anti fungal treatments available from pharmacies without needing to see a GP.

Antifungal treatments work by stopping the fungus causing your athlete's foot from growing. They come in creams, sprays, liquids and powders, and are used in the following way:

- treatment should be applied directly to the affected skin and surrounding area
- wash and dry the affected skin before applying the treatment, and clean your hands afterwards
- continue treatment after the rash has cleared, as described in the leaflet that comes with your medicine, to make sure all the fungus has gone

It's also important to practice good foot hygiene during treatment to speed up recovery and prevent athlete's foot returning.

Prevention

You can reduce your risk of developing athlete's foot by:

- drying your feet gently but thoroughly after washing them, particularly the areas between your toes
- wearing cotton socks and roomy shoes made of natural materials such as leather – this can allow your feet to "breathe"
- wear a fresh pair of socks, tights or stockings every day
- change your shoes every couple of days – this allows them to dry out between uses
- not walking around barefoot in public showers and locker rooms
- not sharing towels, socks and shoes with other people, and ensuring your towels are washed regularly
- using talcum powder on your feet to stop them getting sweaty
- not using moisturiser between your toes, as this can help fungi multiply