

Ringworm

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is a skin infection caused by a fungus, not a worm. This is the same type of fungus that causes skin, hair, and nail infections. Ringworm looks like a worm in the shape of a ring under your skin. It is usually red and itchy. The infection can either be dry and scaly or moist and crusty. Once treated, the infection goes away, and your skin will usually look the way it did before.

Who can get ringworm?

Anyone at any age can get ringworm, even very healthy people. You can get ringworm from humans, animals, and soil. You may be at greater risk if you have a weak immune system, use public showers, are involved in contact sports such as wrestling, or if you have close contact with animals. Outbreaks can happen in schools, households, and institutional settings. Outbreaks are more common in warmer and humid weather.

How do I know if I have ringworm?

If you think you have a ringworm infection you should see your doctor. Your doctor will look at your skin and ask you what symptoms you have. The doctor may also take a small skin clipping to test in the lab to confirm if it is ringworm.

You can help prevent ringworm by:

- Washing your hands often
- Only use your own clean bed sheets, towels, and clothes
- Use hot water when washing your bed sheets, towels, and clothes
- Clean private and public showers often
- Avoid close contact with someone that has ringworm
- Salons should disinfect brushes and combs between customers

What if I have ringworm?

Mild cases of ringworm may be treated with over-the-counter antifungal cream, which your pharmacist can suggest. If the infection gets worse or last more than 4 weeks see a doctor. Your doctor may give you an antifungal cream to put on the infection, or you may be given treatment in the form of a pill. You may need to take the medicine for 2 to 6 weeks—so follow your doctor's orders. If you can see the infection on your skin, you can easily pass it to someone else by touching their skin or sharing unwashed towels or clothes.

What should I do until the infection goes away?

- Avoid pools
- Bathe with soap and water
- Schools may have students with ringworm stay at home
- Clean showers with a soap that will kill fungus
- Clean hard surfaces with 1/4 cup of bleach mixed with water to make one gallon of solution
- Follow the treatment directions from your doctor

Once the infection is gone, you may go swimming and can participate in sports that have close contact with others.