

Information sheet - Tinea (Ringworm)

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is a fungal infection that can affect any part of the body.

How long is the incubation period?

The incubation period lasts from one to three weeks. It varies with the site of infection.

How long is the infectious period?

The infectious period lasts as long as the condition persists.

How do you get ringworm?

Ringworm is spread by direct and indirect contact with humans, animals, and soil.

Humans: through skin and scalp lesions of infected persons, contaminated clothing, bath mats, towels, floors and showers.

Animals: through cats, dogs, mice, guinea pigs. Cattle and horses may be infected.

How do you recognise ringworm?

Ringworm of the Skin

This appears as a flat, spreading, circular lesion. The outer edge is usually reddish. It often contains fluid or pus, but may also be dry and scaly or moist and crusted. Single or multiple rings may appear. The centre of the patch may appear to be healing.

Ringworm of the Scalp and Beard

This condition begins as a small pimple. It spreads outward leaving fine, scaly patches of temporary baldness. Infected hairs become brittle and break off easily.

Ringworm of the Foot (Commonly Known as Tinea or Athlete's Foot)

The characteristics of this common condition are scaling or cracking of the skin, especially between the toes, or blisters containing a thin watery fluid.

Ringworm of the Nail

This condition tends to be a long-term fungal disease and is difficult to treat. It usually affects one or more nails of the hands or feet. The nail gradually thickens and becomes discoloured and brittle.

Cheesy-looking material forms beneath the nail, or the nail becomes chalky and disintegrates.

How do you control ringworm?

- Seek medical advice to confirm diagnosis and receive appropriate treatment
- Exclude infected persons from communal swimming and bathing facilities until appropriate treatment has commenced
- Maintain hygiene by regular, thorough bathing with soap and water and special attention to drying moist areas
- Do not share clothing or personal linen
- Frequently launder clothing and linen in hot water
- Inspect close contacts regularly for signs of infection
- Educate persons regarding the nature of the infection, its mode of spread and the need to maintain good personal hygiene
- Wash pets with anti-fungal solution