

Athlete's Foot (Tinea Pedis)

What is athlete's foot?

Athlete's foot is a fungus infection that causes a scaly, cracked rash between the toes.

The rash may:

- Itch and burn
- Become raw and weepy when scratched
- Spread to the instep
- Cause the foot to have an odor

What causes athlete's foot?

Athlete's foot is caused by a fungus that grows best on warm, damp skin. It occurs mainly in adolescents and adults. Prior to age 10 a red, scaly rash between the toes is usually not athlete's foot.

How long does it last?

With proper treatment, athlete's foot usually clears in 1 to 2 weeks.

How can I take care of my child?

- **Antifungal cream**

Buy Lotrimin, Tinactin or Micatin cream at your drugstore. The cream works better than sprays or powders for children. You do not need a prescription for these medicines.

First, rinse the feet in plain water or water with a little white vinegar added. Dry the feet carefully, especially between the toes. Then apply the cream to the rash and well beyond its borders twice a day. Continue applying the antifungal cream for several weeks, or for at least 7 days after the rash seems to have cleared. Successful treatment often takes 3 or 4 weeks.

- **Dryness**

Keep the feet clean and dry. It helps to go barefoot or wear sandals or thongs as much as possible. Wear shoes that allow the feet to breathe. Wear cotton socks because the cotton absorbs sweat and keeps the feet dry. Change socks twice a day. Dry the feet thoroughly after baths and showers.

- **Foot odor**

The feet often stop smelling bad when the athlete's foot improves. Rinsing the feet and changing socks twice a day are essential. If that doesn't work, rinse the feet in a basin of warm water containing 1 ounce of vinegar. If you can still smell your child coming, wash his tennis shoes in your washing machine with some soap and bleach.

- **Discourage scratching**

Scratching infected feet will delay healing.

- **Contagiousness**

Athlete's foot is not easily passed from person to person but is thought to be spread by direct contact with contaminated surfaces such as locker room or bathroom floors. The fungus won't grow on dry, normal skin. Athlete's foot can cause secondary jock itch if a towel used to dry the feet is then used to dry the groin area.

When should I call my child's healthcare provider?

Call during office hours if:

- Your child is less than 10 years old.
- It looks infected (yellow pus, spreading redness, red streaks).
- The athlete's foot is not improved in 1 week.
- The feet are very painful.
- It is not completely cured after using this treatment for 2 weeks.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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Tinea pedis
(fungal infection)

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