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PHARMACY



Athlete's Foot

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What is Athlete's foot?

It is a fungal infection that presents as a red, scaly rash occurring mainly between the toes although it can be spread to other parts of the body such as the groin or underarms through direct contact. It most commonly occurs in teenage and adult males.



What causes Athlete's foot?

It is most commonly caused by fungal species such as *Trichophyton rubrum*, *Trichophyton mentagrophytes* and *Epidermophyton floccosum* which thrive in damp and moist environments.

How is Athlete's foot transmitted?

- Direct contact with the infected area
- Indirect contact through contaminated surfaces such as gym change rooms and shower areas

What steps can I take to prevent Athlete's foot?

- Change and wash your socks frequently
- Maintain foot hygiene – wash your feet thoroughly with soap and warm water especially between the toes and dry them thoroughly
- Do not go barefoot in public places such as gym change rooms
- Do not share personal items such as towels

How to treat Athlete's foot?

Over-the-counter products

The following over-the-counter creams can be used to provide symptom relief and treat Athlete's foot. These creams need to be applied once up to twice or as directed by your health care provider daily on clean and dry feet for up to 4 weeks including 1 to 2 weeks after the lesion has disappeared to prevent it from recurring.

1. Clotrimazole 1% (Canesten Athlete's foot cream)
2. Miconazole nitrate 2% (Micatin) – available as a cream, spray and powder
3. Tolnaftate 1% (Tinactin Cream) – available as a cream, spray, gel and aerosol

The side effects for these creams are very mild and rare. Some possible side effects include local skin irritation including itching and redness.

Note: Tea tree oil has been used to treat various skin infections; however, there is no evidence to support its use for treatment of Athlete's foot.

Prescription therapy

Your health care professional may recommend prescription therapy if over-the-counter therapy fails despite appropriate application. This indicates that you might have an infection that is resistant to over the counter treatment options. Some antifungal prescription products include Penlac, oral fluconazole, itraconazole, ketoconazole or terbinafine.

Red flags – When to see your doctor?

- If the rash has any pus – this indicates that the lesion is infected
- If the rash is severely inflamed, scarred, has open sores or is painful
- Child under 12 years of age
- If you have other health conditions such as diabetes or cancer
- If your toenail appears thick and discoloured – could possibly be a fungal nail infection, therefore, requiring stronger treatment
- Consult your doctor if your symptoms are not completely gone within six weeks despite using over the counter therapy appropriately

Tips

- Clean exercise equipment in the gym before you use it
- Wear slippers or sandals in public places such as swimming pools and spas
- Do not share personal items such as towels, slippers or shoes
- Keep your feet clean – make sure they are dry before you wear your socks
- It is important to finish the course of therapy despite symptoms improving to prevent recurrence

Disclaimer: The information found in this brochure is not intended to replace the advice of your pharmacist or physician. If you have any questions specific to your health, please contact your healthcare provider.

References:

1. Mayo Clinic Staff. Diseases and conditions – athlete's foot. Mayo Clinic. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/athletes-foot/basics/definition/con-20014892>. Published January 24, 2014. Accessed January 18, 2016.
2. Cole GW. Athlete's foot. MedicineNet. http://www.medicinenet.com/athletes_foot/article.htm. Updated February 4, 2015. Accessed January 18, 2016.