

Athlete's Foot (Tinea Pedis)

Definition

Athlete's foot is a fungal infection that typically occurs on the feet. Because the infection is common among people who exercise or play sports, it was named athlete's foot. However, anyone can experience athlete's foot.

Causes

Fungus thrives in warm, dark, moist places, such as the inside of a shoe, in locker rooms and showers, and around swimming pools. When you walk through a contaminated area, your bare feet come in contact with the fungus. If your feet or the area between your toes stays moist, the fungus will grow.

Risk Factors

A risk factor is something that increases your chance of getting a disease or condition. Risk factors include:

- Prior athlete's foot infection
- Walking barefoot in locker rooms or public places
- Not keeping your feet clean and dry
- Wearing air-tight or poorly ventilated shoes or boots
- Sweaty feet
- Hot, humid weather
- Disorders of the immune system

Symptoms

Athlete's foot symptoms usually start between the toes. As the infection progresses, it may spread to the soles or arches of the feet or to the toenails.

Symptoms often occur in combination and may include:

- Dry skin
- Itching, which worsens as the infection spreads
- Scaling
- Cracking
- Redness
- A white, wet surface
- Blisters, which may open and become painful

Treatment

Treatment aims to rid the body of the infection. Therapy may include good foot hygiene or medication. Many over-the-counter antifungal medications are available. However, if the infection persists for two weeks or more, seek medical care.

Foot Hygiene

- Gently wash your feet often (at least daily) with soap and water, and completely dry all areas, including between the toes.
- Put a dusting of antifungal foot powder on your feet or in your shoes to absorb moisture.
- Change your shoes and socks frequently.
- Do not swim or use public locker rooms when you have an infection. This will help prevent spreading the infection to other people.

Prevention

Preventing athlete's foot can be difficult, but keeping your feet clean and dry will help. Suggestions include:

- Gently wash your feet every day using soap and water.
- Dry carefully between the toes.
- Wear shoes that are comfortable and allow your feet to breathe.
- Wear sandals in the summer.
- Change shoes often.
- Wear cotton socks that wick moisture away from your skin.
- Change socks when they become damp.
- Apply an antifungal foot powder to your feet or shoes.
- Take off your shoes and socks and walk barefoot at home when possible.
- Do not walk barefoot in damp places.
- Wear shower shoes or sandals in public locker rooms.
- Do not borrow other people's shoes.

Acetic Acid Soaks: Use $\frac{1}{4}$ Cup of white vinegar in a pan of warm water. Soak your feet for 10-15 minutes daily until the symptoms have resolved. May soak feet 2-3 times/wk to prevent re-occurrence of fungal infection.