

Tinea Pedis (“athlete’s foot”)

What is it?



Athlete's foot (tinea pedis) is a skin infection of the feet caused by a [fungus](#). The fungus commonly grows on or in the top layer of human skin and may or may not cause infections. This same fungus can cause jock itch and toenail infections.

For most people, athlete's foot is not contagious. Many people who come in contact with the [fungus](#) do not develop an infection. Certain people are more likely to develop athlete's foot, however. This is often genetically determined.

While some people have athlete's foot and are not aware of it, others develop symptoms. Symptoms can include:

- A foul odor.
- Itching and/or burning.
- Scaling of the feet (often the bottom and sides).
- Peeling or cracking between the toes (usually between the smallest toes).
- Infected toenails with crumbling, scaling, thickening, yellowing, or loss of the nail.



Once you have had athlete's foot, you are more likely to get it again.

How is it treated?

Athlete's foot can usually be treated with over the counter antifungal creams (Clotrimazole, or Miconazole). More severe infections may require oral medications. Toenail infections (onychomycosis) that can develop with athlete's foot tend to be more difficult to cure than fungal skin infections.

Although your symptoms may decrease or stop soon after treatment begins, it is important to use the medication for the entire length of time because the fungus can be very difficult to kill.

Once the fungus is killed, the second phase of athlete's foot treatment is prevention. Fungal infections tend to return, but you can prevent future infections by doing the following:

- Keeping your feet clean and dry.
- Drying between your toes after bathing or swimming.
- Use an antifungal cream or powder on your feet regularly.
- Wearing roomy shoes or sandals that allow your feet to breathe.
- Wearing shoes or sandals in public showers and locker rooms.
- Allowing your shoes to dry 24 hours before wearing them again.
- If you have athlete's foot, put your socks on before your underwear. This can prevent fungi from spreading from your feet to your groin, which may cause jock itch.

Prevention must become a habit!