



Central Michigan District Health Department

Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities



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Ringworm

What is Ringworm?

Ringworm is an infection of the skin caused by a fungus. It gets its name from its appearance on the skin because the rash is often ring-shaped. Despite the name, ringworm is not caused by a worm.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- A scaly ring-shaped area, typically on the buttocks, trunk, arms, and legs.
- A clear or scaly area inside the ring, perhaps with bumps whose color ranges from reddish, purplish, brown, or gray.
- A round, flat patch of itchy skin.
- Overlapping rings.
- Slightly raised, expanding rings.
- Itchiness.

How is it spread?

You can get ringworm from people, animals, or places such as:

- Touching a person who has ringworm.
- Using items such as clothes, towels, or hairbrushes that were used by someone with a ringworm infection.
- Coming in contact with the hair or dander of an infected animal.
- Using common areas like gyms, shower stalls, and floors if used by someone with ringworm.

What is the treatment for Ringworm?

A doctor can do a simple test to determine whether a rash is ringworm; but it is typically diagnosed by clinical presentation. Treatment is usually an antifungal cream applied to the site of infection or less commonly, antifungal pills taken by mouth.

Ringworm can be prevented by:

- Keeping common-use areas clean.
- Use a floor and bath cleaner that contains a fungus-killing (called “fungicidal”) agent.
- Avoid physical contact with a person or animal that has ringworm.
- Do not share clothing, towels, hairbrushes, or other personal items.

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How can I guard against the spread of this disease?

- Follow your doctor's advice for proper treatment.
- Keep your skin, hair, and nails clean and dry.
- Do not share towels, clothing, or hairbrushes.
- Wash towels and clothing in hot water and soap to destroy the fungus.
- Stay away from common areas such as community pools and gyms until your infection goes away.