

Ringworm

Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child may have been exposed to **ringworm** while at child care.

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is caused by a fungus that can infect the skin. It is not caused by a worm.

What are the symptoms of ringworm?

On the body, ringworm appears as a flat, expanding, ring-shaped patch with borders that are red, elevated, scaly and itchy. The center of the ring is often normal. Groups of rings may be so close to one another that it can be difficult to recognize them as individual rings. On the scalp, the infection begins as a small scaly patch. Infected hairs become brittle and easily break off, causing circular or oval bald spots. Some of the fungi that cause ringworm can also cause tinea versicolor (irregular, whitish patches of skin), athlete's foot (a scaly, itchy rash between the toes) and nail infections (thickened, discolored, and crumbly finger- or toenails).

How serious is ringworm?

Ringworm infections are usually not serious and are easily treated.

How does a person get ringworm?

Ringworm is spread when infected skin touches healthy skin or when infected broken nails or skin flakes fall onto tables and floors and get onto toys and other objects, and are touched by others. It can also be spread from animals (especially cats) to people.

How long does it take to come down with ringworm after a person is exposed?

It is unknown how long after exposure ringworm appears.

When is a person with ringworm contagious?

A person with ringworm is contagious at least as long as the lesions are untreated.

How can I help prevent the spread of ringworm?

- Wash hands well and often with soap and water, especially after touching ringworm patches.
- Clean, rinse, and sanitize toys regularly at child care.
- Prevent sharing of unwashed clothing, sheets, washcloths, or towels.
- Wash clothing, sheets, washcloths, and towels of person with ringworm in hot water.
- Keep infected area(s) covered with clothing or bandage(s). (Prevent ringworm patches from coming into direct contact with the skin of other children.)
- Administer medication to a child with ringworm as prescribed.

What is the treatment for ringworm?

An antifungal ointment or cream is applied to the skin for several weeks. Both over-the-counter and prescription medications are available. Occasionally, antifungal medicine is taken by mouth, particularly if the ringworm is on the scalp.

If my child develops ringworm, must s/he stay away from child care?

Yes, until after treatment is started. Ringworm patches on the skin should be kept covered by clothing or bandage(s) until they disappear. (A cap is not necessary if ringworm is on the scalp.)

