



## Health Fact Sheet: Ringworm

### What is Ringworm?

Ringworm is a contagious itching skin disease occurring in small circular patches, caused by any of a number of fungi which is common among children. (Not actually a worm)

### Causes of Ringworm

- Fungi can enter the body through broken skin (scratches, cuts and eczema)
- Fungi can come from animals, soil and humans
- Transmission is from person to person contact/sharing clothing and towels
- Ringworm thrives in warm/damp areas
- Those working with animals and children who have pets are more susceptible to becoming infected.

### Symptoms

- a ring-like red or silvery rash on your skin – your skin will look red and irritated around the ring, but healthy inside
- scaly, itchy and inflamed skin

In more severe cases:

- the rings may multiply, grow in size and merge together
- the rings may feel slightly raised and the skin underneath may be itchy
- blisters and pus-filled sores may form around the rings

The ring spreads outwards as it progresses. You can have one patch or several patches of ringworm, and in more serious cases, your skin may become raised and blistered.

### Diagnosis

Early detection could save a trip to the Doctor as your pharmacist will be able to provide you with treatment. A scraping of skin can be taken and observed under a microscope, but usually your doctor can diagnose ringworm from observation.

### Treatment

- Antifungal creams, to be used for up to 4 weeks and 1-2 weeks after skin has healed
- Powders/lotions and creams are available from the pharmacy or on prescription from your doctor
- Visit your doctor if you are unsure if it is ringworm or if the infection appears to be severe
- Visit a doctor if the infection is not responding to treatment after about four weeks
- If the affected areas are inflamed/red/sore then the doctor may prescribe a topical cream called a corticosteroid to treat this.



### Scalp Ringworm

- Antifungal tablets, can be prescribed for up to 10 weeks
- Medicated shampoos can be used alongside tablet treatment.

### Prevention

- Keep your skin clean and dry. Change your socks and underwear at least once a day.
- Wear loose-fitting cotton clothing. Avoid tight underwear, pants, and panty hose.
- Always dry yourself completely after showers or baths. After drying your skin with a towel, allow your skin to air-dry before putting your clothes on.
- Do not share clothing, sports equipment, towels, or sheets. If you think you have been exposed to ringworm
- Wear slippers or sandals in locker rooms, showers, and public bathing areas.
- Shower and shampoo thoroughly after any sport that requires skin-to-skin contact. And after haircuts.
- If you have athlete's foot, put your socks on before your underwear so that fungi do not spread from your feet to your groin. Also, when towelling off after a shower or bath, dry your feet last.
- Check the whole family for signs of infection
- Take your pet to a veterinarian if it has patches of missing hair, which may be a sign of a fungal infection. Household pets can spread fungi that cause ringworm in people.
- Once children have commenced treatment they do not need to be excluded from school.