Ringworm- Factsheet

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is a disease of the skin caused by a fungus.

What are the symptoms of ringworm?

Ringworm usually shows itself as crusty yellow sores (lesions) that are usually circular. They can occur on the face, body and scalp. When they appear on the scalp, they may produce dandruff-like flakes and hair loss.

How is ringworm spread?

Ringworm is spread through direct contact with an infested person or animals or with shared items such as combs, brushes, hair ribbons, or headgear.

How long are people contagious?

People can spread the fungus as long as they have ringworm sores.

Who gets ringworm?

Anyone can get ringworm. It can affect people of any age, gender, race or level of cleanliness. Even if a person has had a ringworm infestation before, s/he can be infested again if they are exposed to the fungus. Outbreaks of ringworm may occur in nursing homes, institutions and childcare centers.

What treatment is available for people with ringworm?

Your doctor can prescribe medicated skin lotions or shampoos to treat ringworm. These medications should be used exactly as described by your health care provider. Trim fingernails and clean under them to remove any fungus.

Do infected people need to be kept home from school, work or daycare?

No. Infected persons may go to school, work or day care. However, if they have open sores or their sores are leaking fluid, they should cover the sores with a bandage when possible. They should also avoid activities where they are likely to spread the fungus (e.g., gym or swimming).

How can I protect myself and my family from getting ringworm?

- If someone in a family has ringworm, everyone in the household should be checked.
- Promptly clean “dirtied” or contaminated surfaces or objects (e.g., sports equipment) with household chlorine bleach cleaners.