

Athlete's Foot

Athlete's foot is a rash caused by a fungus which usually appears between the toes. It's not usually serious, but should be treated to stop it spreading to other parts of the body or other people. Athlete's foot most commonly affects the skin between the toes or on the bottom of the feet.

Affected areas of skin may be:

- dry, red, scaly and flaky
- white, soggy and cracked
- itchy
- sore
- covered in small blisters

Scratching the infected skin and then touching other parts of your body could spread the infection.

How can I avoid triggers/ suggested lifestyle changes

Athlete's foot is caused by fungi growing and multiplying on the skin. You can reduce your risk of developing athlete's foot by:

- drying your feet gently but thoroughly after washing them, particularly the areas between your toes
- wearing cotton socks and roomy shoes made of natural materials such as leather – this can allow your feet to "breathe"
- wear a fresh pair of socks, tights or stockings every day
- change your shoes every couple of days – this allows them to dry out between uses
- not walking around barefoot in public showers and locker rooms
- not sharing towels, socks and shoes with other people, and ensuring your towels are washed regularly
- using talcum powder on your feet to stop them getting sweaty
- not using moisturiser between your toes, as this can help fungi multiply
- wash socks at 60°C or above.

If you or your child develops athlete's foot there is no need to stay off work or school.

How do I treat Athlete's foot?

Athlete's foot is unlikely to get better on its own. It can usually be treated using antifungal treatments available from pharmacies without the need to see a GP. A pharmacist can recommend an antifungal medicine that's safe for you to use; not all types are suitable for children, older people, and pregnant or breastfeeding women. Fastidious washing, removal of skin debris and drying between individual toes two to three times per day aids healing when creams appear not to be working.

When should I seek advice?

- treatments from a pharmacy don't work
- you're in a lot of discomfort
- your foot is red, hot and painful – this could be a more serious infection
- you have diabetes – foot problems can be more serious if you have diabetes
- you have a weakened immune system – for example, you've had an organ transplant or are having chemotherapy

More information is available at the following website

- NHS website - www.nhs.uk
- Or visit your local pharmacy for advice

The 'Be self-care aware' campaign was created by NHS Derby and Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group and is reproduced here with their kind permission.