

CEDARS FOOT & ANKLE CENTER

Disorders and Surgery of the Foot & Ankle

ATHLETE'S FOOT

What is it?

Athlete's foot, also known as tinea pedis, is a very common fungal skin infection of the foot. It often first appears between the toes. It can be a one-time occurrence or it can be chronic. The fungus, known as *Trichophyton rubrum*, thrives under warm, damp conditions so people whose feet sweat a great deal are more susceptible. It is easily transmitted in showers and pool walkways. Those people with immunosuppressive conditions, such as diabetes mellitus, are also more susceptible to athlete's foot.

Signs and symptoms:

- Itchy feet.
- White or red and soft scaling on feet, usually in between toes.
- Small blisters may be present.
- Bad foot odor.
- Very rare involvement of hands and simultaneously (called an Id reaction).

Treatment:

- Diagnosis is via clinical symptoms or sometimes by examining skin scrapings under a microscope. A bacterial infection may also be suspected in which case a skin culture will confirm this.
- Try a non-prescription antifungal powder or cream available in drugstores; your doctor can prescribe a stronger topical antifungal medication if necessary.
- Oral antibiotics may be prescribed for a possible coexisting bacterial infection.
- Keep feet as dry as possible! Change socks twice a day if necessary and wear those made of natural fibers, such as cotton. Go barefoot when you have a chance or wear sandals. Dry thoroughly in between toes after swimming or bathing.
- A special powder to absorb moisture on feet is also available in drugstores. Ask the pharmacist about this.
- Spray your shower at home with a 10% bleach solution after bathing. This may help decrease the chance that other family members will be infected.
- Wear sandals or thongs in public showers and around pools.
- Keep in mind that it may take up to a month or more to get rid of your athlete's foot. Be diligent in using the antifungal medication. Unfortunately, recurrence of athlete's foot is common. Luckily, the condition does not cause serious problems for the majority of people who have it.
- Call the office if your athlete's foot spreads or worsens despite treatment.