

Know Your Way Around Ringworm

Ringworm is a fungal infection of the skin or scalp, often transferred from puppies or kittens that have it. A worm does not cause ringworm.

RINGWORM OF THE SKIN (TINEA CORPORIS):

WHAT IS IT?

Ringworm appears as a ring-shaped pink patch. The pink patch is usually one-half to 1 inch in size with a scaly, raised border and clear center. The ring slowly gets bigger and may be mildly itchy.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Ringworm of the skin is contagious. It spreads from direct skin-to-skin contact. After 48 hours of treatment, ringworm is no longer contagious. The rash may take up to four weeks to clear.

HOW IS IT TREATED?

An antifungal cream, recommended by the child's doctor, can be used to treat ringworm of the skin. If the rash does not improve, or the child's condition worsens, the child should return to the doctor.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL THE DOCTOR?

Call the child's doctor if the skin rash:

- Has not cleared up in three weeks.
- Continues to spread after one week of treatment.
- Spreads from the scalp to the body or from the body to the scalp.
- Produces pus drainage.

RINGWORM OF THE SCALP (TINEA CAPITIS):

WHAT IS IT?

Ringworm of the scalp may appear as round patches of hair loss that slowly increase in size. There is a black-dotted, stubbled appearance within the bald spots of the scalp from hair shafts that are broken off at the surface. The scalp may be swollen with tender areas, too. Scaling on the scalp and mild itching of the scalp may be present. More than 90 percent of the cases of ringworm of the scalp are caused by a fungus that infects the hairs and causes them to break.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Infected children usually transmit ringworm of the scalp. Combs, brushes, hats, barrettes, seat backs, pillows and bath towels can all spread the fungus.

HOW IS IT TREATED?

Antifungal creams are not effective treatment for ringworm of the scalp because they cannot reach the fungus deep in the hair roots. Ringworm of the scalp requires a visit to the doctor and eight weeks of a special medicine by mouth. Sometimes, infected children need to return to the doctor for lab work.

This general information should not be used as a substitute or in place of contacting your child's healthcare provider. If you need further assistance, call 404-250-KIDS to speak to a pediatric nurse. Visit www.choa.org/teachingsheets for more information.