

# RINGWORM

→ Childcare and preschools use these pages, schools use pages 225-226

Ringworm is a fungal infection of the body, scalp, or hair. There have been reports of increasing numbers of cases. The infection is most common in children.

**CAUSE:** Several different fungi. (It is not a worm.)

**SYMPTOMS:** **Body** – Ringworm appears as flat, spreading, ring-shaped areas on the skin (lesions). The edge of the lesion may be dry and scaly or moist and crusted. As the lesion spreads outward, the center often becomes clear.

**Scalp** – Ringworm may be hard to detect in the early stages. It often begins as a small scaly patch on the scalp and may progress to larger areas of scaling. Mild redness, swelling, itching and pustules (pus-filled bumps) may occur. Infected hairs become brittle and break off easily.

**SPREAD:** By touching the lesions of infected persons or pets (usually dogs and cats), or from sharing objects that touched the lesions of an infected person, (e.g., hats, caps, combs, brushes, towels, pillows, bedding, sofas, clothing, hair ribbons, barrettes).

**INCUBATION:** For **ringworm of the body**, it takes about 4 to 10 days after exposure for symptoms to appear.  
For **ringworm of the scalp**, it takes 10 to 14 days.

**CONTAGIOUS PERIOD:** Contagious as long as lesions are present. Contagiousness is reduced once treatment has begun.

**EXCLUSION:** Until 24 hours after treatment has been started. Children with ringworm should not participate in gym, swimming, and other activities that are likely to expose others.

**DIAGNOSIS:** If you suspect ringworm in your household members, call your healthcare provider. If you suspect ringworm in your pet, contact a veterinarian.

**TREATMENT:** Call your healthcare provider to ask about treatment and other comfort measures. It is important to follow your healthcare provider's directions exactly about the amount of time that the ointments need to be put on the lesions and the amount of time the oral medication should be taken.

**Body ringworm:** Antifungal ointments are used on skin lesions for 4 weeks.

**Scalp ringworm:** Medications should be taken by mouth (oral) for 4–8 weeks.

## PREVENTION/CONTROL:

1. DO NOT share personal items such as brushes, combs, towels, bedding or pillows, clothing, hats, caps, hair ribbons, and barrettes. Wash combs and brushes in hot, soapy water. Wash bedding and clothing in hot, soapy water.
2. Each child should have separate bedding and pillows at home and at the childcare facility.
3. Provide separate storage space for personal items for each child or staff member.

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### PREVENTION/CONTROL CONTINUED:

4. Vacuum carpeted areas and upholstered furniture regularly.
5. a. Check all household contacts, including pets, for signs of infection. If infection is present, treatment should be started as soon as possible.
- b. Any pet in the childcare setting or home with a rash should be checked by a veterinarian. If the pet has ringworm, children should not be allowed to have contact with the pet until the rash has been treated and heals.

For more information, you or your healthcare provider may call Hennepin County Community Health Department at (952) 351-5230, or call your local health department.