



E-Bulletin

INTRODUCTION

The E - Bulletin is a service provided from the in-house team of physicians (Specialists, GP's & the In-house Training Center) at the **CEDARS – J. A. International Hospital** in order to raise awareness about health issues. This edition addresses the topic – **FUNGAL FOOT INFECTIONS**.

Fungal skin infections usually affect your skin because they live off keratin, a protein that makes up your skin, hair and nails. Fungal skin infections are divided into groups, depending on what type of organism is involved. The full name depends on where the infection is found on your body.

TYPES OF FUNGAL FOOT INFECTIONS:

Some common fungal infections are listed below:

Dermatophyte infections

Most basic fungal skin infections are caused by dermatophytes - types of fungi that cause skin, nail and hair infections. They are very common, affecting between one and two in 10 people at some point in their lives. Dermatophyte infections include the following.

Athlete's foot (Tinea pedis and Tinea manuum)

Around 25 in 100 adults have athlete's foot at some time in their lives. It's caused by a combination of fungi and bacteria, causing your skin to become itchy, dry, scaly and red, especially between your toes. Sometimes it causes blisters and cracked skin. You often pick up athlete's foot from contaminated skin scales in swimming pools, showers and saunas. If you don't wash your hands after touching a contaminated





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area, it can spread to your hands where it's known as Tinea manuum. It mostly affects the creases on your palms and sides of your fingers.

Nail infections

Onychomycosis is the name for any fungal nail infection. Tinea unguium (ringworm of your nails) is a common infection. Your nails become malformed, thickened and crumbly. Not all nails affected like this are caused by fungal infections, but it's a common cause. Toenail infections are commonly linked with athlete's foot. Your fingernails can be affected too.

Ringworm of the groin (Tinea cruris)

This is often called 'jock itch' because it occurs in sportspeople and is common among young men. It causes an itchy, red rash in your groin and the surrounding area and is usually seen in men who have been sweating a lot. Often you will also have athlete's foot, and scratching your feet, followed by your groin may spread the infection.

Symptoms of fungal infections

The symptoms and appearance of a fungal skin infection depend on the type of fungus causing it and the part of your body affected.

Fungal skin infections can cause rashes with a variety of different appearances. Some are red, scaly and itchy; whereas others can produce appear similar to dry skin. The fungus may infect just one area or several areas of your body.

Causes of fungal infections

You're more at risk of getting a fungal infection if you:

- have recently taken a course of antibiotics
- are taking steroids
- have diabetes
- are overweight
- have had fungal skin infections in the past
- have a weakened immune system caused, for example, by cancer or HIV/AIDS



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Moist skin encourages fungal skin infections. This means you're more likely to pick one up if you don't dry your skin properly after sweating or bathing, or if you wear tight clothes that don't allow sweat to evaporate. Damage to the surface of your skin, such as a cut or graze, can also encourage fungi to grow.

Fungal infections inside your body can cause more serious health problems than those on your skin. These infections only affect people whose immune systems aren't working properly - either as a result of an illness such as HIV/AIDS, or because you're taking medicines that suppress your immune system.

How do fungal skin infections spread?

Fungal skin infections can be spread from person to person. For example, athlete's foot is thought to be spread in communal areas, such as gyms and swimming pools. Contact with bed sheets or towels and personal items such as hairbrushes can also spread fungal infections. It's also possible to catch some fungal infections from animals such as cats or dogs, and, more rarely, cattle. Ringworm is occasionally caught this way.

Diagnosis of fungal infections

- 1- Symptoms and signs
- 2- Skin scraping, or a fragment of nail or hair, and send it to a laboratory for testing, to confirm the diagnosis.

Treatment of fungal skin infections

As most fungal skin infections are surface infections, you will usually need to use antifungal treatments that are applied directly to your skin in the infected area (topical treatments).

There are a variety of treatments available in the form of creams, lotions and medicated powders. If the rash covers quite a large area of your skin, or affects your nails or scalp, you may need to take some tablets.

These treatments are usually effective. They can occasionally cause side-effects, which may include skin irritation or an upset stomach. It isn't unusual for your rash to return, even when it seems to have been treated. You may need to take some treatments for a few weeks, or up to 18 months for toenail infections.



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Prevention of fungal skin infections

There are some steps you can take to reduce your risk of getting a fungal skin infection. You should:

- dry your skin carefully after bathing
- wear loose fitting clothes and underwear
- choose cotton socks and natural fibre underwear to allow your skin to breathe
- not share towels, hair brushes, and combs
- wash bed linen and clothes often to get rid of fungal spores
- throw away or disinfect pillows, hats, combs or scissors with bleach if someone in your family has scalp ringworm
- always wear flip-flops or plastic shoes in communal area such as swimming pools
- alternate shoes every two or three days so that they have time to dry out (to help prevent athlete's foot)
- wear synthetic fibres that 'wick' the sweat away from the body, helping to keep your skin dry, if you're exercising

If you have diabetes, you need to keep your blood sugar levels under control (for more information, see Related topics).

Remember: foot problems cause gait disturbance & asymmetric pressure over knee & hip & spine then increase pain, decrease activity, sport & lead to weight gain and finally cardiac and renal problem.

Hence healthy foot means healthy body & happy life!!

NOTE:

For further information about our dietician, please call 00971 (4) 881 4000

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