

MSAD # 13 / RSU #83

Health Alert

Ringworm (Tinea)

Important Notice to Parents

Ringworm is not caused by a worm, but by various types of fungi. It is caused by an infection and can affect various parts of the body. When found on the body it is called tinea corporis; when on the scalp, tinea capitis; when in the groin, tinea cruris; and when on the feet, tinea pedis. (see Athlete's Foot section). It is a very common infection. Ringworm begins as a small, red patch or bump that spreads outward, so that each affected area takes on the appearance of a red, scaly, outer ring with a clear central area. Hair may become brittle and break off in gradually spreading areas. The lesions are frequently itchy and can become infected if scratched.

The incubation period varies depending on the type of ringworm. It is usually between 4 and 21 days. The incubation period for Tinea capitis is typically 10 to 14 days, Tinea corporis and Tinea cruris is usually 4 - 10 days, and the incubation period for Tinea pedis is unknown.

Transmission of ringworm is generally by person-to-person or contaminated article-to-person contact. Infected animals may be a source for scalp and body infections, although rarely. Tinea capitis can also be transmitted by inanimate infected objects such as the back of seats, combs, brushes, or hats. Tinea cruris, corporis and pedis can be contracted from places such as shower stalls, benches, contaminated floors, and articles used by an infected person.

A person can spread ringworm as long as lesions are present and viable fungus persists on contaminated materials and surfaces.

Individuals with a fungal infection of the skin should be evaluated by a medical provider for treatment. Exclusion from school is not needed unless the nature of their contact with other students could potentiate spread.

Individuals infected with tinea pedis should be excluded from swimming pools, and from walking barefoot on locker room and shower floors until treatment has been initiated. Shower areas at home and at school should be cleaned frequently. Individuals with tinea capitis should not share combs, hats, hair accessories, or hair brushes.

Individuals should keep the affected area covered to minimize transmission.

Ringworm of the body is not particularly dangerous, has no unusual long-term consequences, and can generally be treated quite effectively with locally applied preparations. A prescribed oral medication may be needed for severe or persistent cases of body ringworm and is necessary to treat all ringworm of the scalp

Please contact the school nurse, Mel Chadbourne, RN if you have any questions. More information is also available at the Maine CDC web site.