

A Guide to Athlete's Foot

Podiatry & Orthotics Directorate

Athlete's Foot is a fungal infection of the skin.
Footwear can create the necessary conditions of moisture and warmth between the toes.

Communal activity permits the spread of infection.

Swimming baths and communal changing rooms are the most frequent sources of infection.

How does athlete's foot present?

It may present as:

- Itching (especially between the toes).
- Red, raw looking skin.
- Flaking, peeling or cracked skin
- Small spot-like, sometimes yellow blisters.
- A rash.

How can I prevent athlete's foot?

- Wash feet daily with soap and tepid water.
- Dry feet thoroughly (but gently between toes).
- Choose hosiery made from natural fibres.
- Change socks or stockings every day
- Never wear shoes or slippers belonging to others or allow others to wear your footwear.
- Wear well-fitting shoes or sandals wherever possible. Tight footwear holds the toes together, preventing air circulating between the toes.
- Select shoes made of material such as leather in preference to synthetic materials.
- Feet may sweat so change shoes regularly to allow them to dry out
- Apply surgical spirit in between your toes with a cotton bud.

How to prevent the spread of fungal infection?

- Follow good foot and hand hygiene.
- Use your own towel.
- Wear 'flip flops' (or similar) when changing in communal places.
- Thoroughly rinse the bath or shower after use.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly after touching the skin on your feet to prevent the spread of infection.

Treatment

Skin

There are topical treatments available.

Consult your local Pharmacist for advice on the most suitable product.

Nails

Sometimes a fungal infection can spread to your toenails with the nail becoming thickened, brittle and yellowish brown in colour.

Infections here are most difficult to clear totally because the nail is often thickened.

Your Podiatrist can thin the nail plate to assist treatment.

A mild infection may respond to topical application (directly to the nail plate) but a cure usually requires tablets that can be prescribed by your GP and will need to be taken for several months.

Alternative treatment may be made available to you by your GP, if they consider it necessary.

References:

NICE Guidelines www.cks.nhs.uk/fungal_skin_infection_foot/management

[www.patient.co.uk/health/Athlete's-Foot\(Tinea Pedis\).htm](http://www.patient.co.uk/health/Athlete's-Foot(Tinea_Pedis).htm)