

Protect Your Teenage Kids From Athlete's Foot

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Athlete's foot among male teenagers is common.

Teenagers are susceptible to contracting fungal skin infections upon hitting puberty due to an increase in new hormones.

All these newfound hormones do more than just cause mood swings and growth spurts. They actually kick our sweat glands into overdrive, drenching our teens in more sweat than they thought possible—particularly when they are actively engaged in strenuous activities.

These sweat glands can occur all over the body but are most concentrated on the soles of the feet. The sweat produced by these sebaceous glands is actually odorless. It only starts to stink when sweat mixes with the bacteria that live on their skin.

Teenagers also wear enclosed shoes quite frequently, especially those who are into sports.

It makes them prone to catching athlete's foot infection as enclosed footwear can keep their feet damp and moist, enabling fungi to multiply vigorously if good hygiene is not observed.

Unfortunately, most young teens are often less mindful of personal hygiene as this daily hygiene routine is pretty new to them.

There are times when wearing enclosed shoes is necessary for safety reasons. In such cases, we can require our kids to change their socks a few times a day to keep their feet moist free.

Athlete's Foot in Male Teenagers

Tinea Pedis or athlete's foot is a common fungal skin infection that emerges and proliferates in warm and moist environments with little to no airflow. It is a result of an overgrowth of skin fungus that eventually leads to a fungal skin infection.

Although fungi are slower to mutate than bacteria, they can still spread quickly as they are deemed contagious. Fortunately, their relatively slower mutation rate makes them more susceptible to targeted treatment with antifungal medications, unlike bacteria which are less responsive to antibiotics.

Signs and Symptoms of Athlete's Foot

Common signs and symptoms of athlete's foot are as follows:

1. Itchy blisters on your feet
2. Burning or Stinging of skin in the affected area
3. Dry, scaly, or cracked and peeled skin between the toes, soles, or sides of your feet
4. Thick, brittle, and crumbly toenails

5. Inflamed skin with discoloration [which can appear red, gray, or purple depending on your skin tone]

Athlete's foot can mimic some of the symptoms of other skin infections or diseases. If you're unsure whether it's an athlete's foot or something else, seek the help of your health provider to determine the cause of the infection.

Risk Factors for Tinea Pedis

You are at a high risk of contracting athlete's foot if you:

1. Wear enclosed shoes regularly
2. Perspire heavily
3. Have diabetes
4. Have a weakened immune system
5. Share stuff with an infected person like clothes, shoes, bed linens, and rugs.
6. Walk barefoot in public spaces where the fungi can easily thrive and multiply.

Examples of such places are as follows:

- Communal showers and baths
- Saunas
- Locker rooms
- Swimming pools

Most Frequently Asked Questions About Athlete's Foot

Why Is It Called Athlete's Foot?

This fungal disease is termed as such because it's commonly seen in athletes. They are more vulnerable to catching the infection because their feet are often sweaty and damp due to a boatload of vigorous physical activities they engage in. Nevertheless, anyone, including young teens, can contract this type of fungal infection.

Is athlete's foot dangerous?

Generally, an athlete's foot does not cause serious problems, especially for relatively healthy individuals. But if you have severe infections, a compromised immune system, or a medical condition such as diabetes, it can cause serious complications.

How to clear up athlete's foot?

1. Keep your feet dry – Don't wear enclosed shoes regularly to keep fungi at bay.

2. Wash your feet daily with soap and warm water– then rinse and dry your feet thoroughly, especially between the toes.
3. Apply medicated ointment or foot powder to keep your feet dry and free of fungus.
4. Use a separate towel for your feet and wash it after each use to prevent the spread of infection.
5. Try to change your socks twice a day, more frequently if you sweat heavily.
6. Don't wear the same shoes daily to give your footwear enough time to dry before using them again.
7. Never walk barefoot in public places – Put on waterproof sandals or shoes around the communal pools, showers, and locker rooms.
8. Use natural home remedies to facilitate healing and alleviate the discomforts.
9. Eat healthy – Eat nutrient-dense food and reduce sugar to fight infection.
10. Soak your feet in salt water or diluted vinegar.
11. Be considerate – Avoid sharing your personal stuff with others to stop the infection in its tracks.

When to see a doctor?

It's time to see a doctor if :

- The infection remains unhealed after two weeks of self-treatment using over-the-counter antifungal meds.
- Have a more serious infection
- The foot or leg is inflamed, hot, painful, and red (the redness can be less visible on people with dark skin tone)
- You have a weakened immune system
- You may have a compromised immune system if you have had a major surgical operation, have just given birth, have undergone chemotherapy, etc.
- You have diabetes

If you suffer from diabetes and suspect you have athlete's foot, you must consult your doctor immediately. Nerve damage and lack of blood flow due to diabetes can put you at risk of developing other serious complications, such as foot ulcers which can lead to foot amputation.

Should you be undergoing any treatment, always follow the doctor's advice concerning medicine usage. Even if rashes on the foot seem to be healing, continue using the medicine as recommended, otherwise, the infection may come back sooner than expected.

How long does it take for athlete's foot to heal?

It depends upon the severity of your condition, it may take weeks to heal the infection using topical or oral antifungal meds.

If your symptoms are mild, over-the-counter antifungal ointments, creams, powders, and sprays can heal the infection within two to three weeks. Others were able to clear up the infection using natural home remedies.

Keep in mind that natural remedies are often not sufficient to resolve serious infections. Severe symptoms or infections that have not cleared after two weeks of self-treatment necessitate a more potent antifungal medicine such as those prescribed by doctors.

These prescription medicines can either be in pill form or topical (applied to skin). Treatment may also have to continue for a number of weeks or even longer, especially if it starts infecting the toenails.

What happens to an untreated athlete's foot?

Even in the absence of any medical condition, getting rid of the fungal infection is a must. If left untreated, it will make you susceptible to severe bacterial infection, not to mention the pain, the discomfort— and the foul smell it emits can be annoyingly off-putting.

How Is Athlete's Foot Diagnosed?

A doctor can diagnose an athlete's foot by examining the symptoms and signs of the infection.

But if the doctor is still skeptical of what's ailing you even after checking the symptoms, he may order a skin test by scraping off a small area of scaly, infected skin.

The scraped skin will then be placed in potassium hydroxide, a chemical formula that decimates normal cells but leaves the fungal cells relatively unscathed — making the fungi responsible for the infection become visible under a microscope.

Can an athlete's foot spread to other parts of the body?

Due to its high contagiousness, people can unwittingly spread the infection from the foot to the groin as the fungi can travel on hands. A reason why individuals with athlete's foot are also predisposed to developing jock itch — as these skin infections are caused by the same fungi.

It is advisable not to touch the infected area to avoid spreading the fungus to the other parts of the body, such as the groin. If you did so by accident, disinfect your hands immediately by washing them with soap and warm water. In addition, always use a separate towel for your infected feet and wash it after each use.

How to wash hands the proper way to kill fungus and bacteria?

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water and apply soap. [Don't forget to turn off the tap]
2. Lather your hands with soap by rubbing them together.
3. Do not forget the backs of your hands, under your nails, in the cracks and crevices between your fingers.
4. Scrub them for at least 20 seconds.

5. Rinse them thoroughly under clean and running water.

6. Dry your hands with a dry, clean towel

Can you spread athlete's foot to another person?

This fungus proliferates in warm and humid conditions and can be highly contagious. A person can catch the infection through direct contact with an infected individual, by walking barefoot on the same floors, or by using the same towels, footwear, rugs, etc.

Can athlete's foot spread through bedsheets?

Sleeping in the same bed with an infected person can make you vulnerable to contracting the infection, especially if you have a weakened immune system.

How often should I wash my bedsheets if I have athlete's foot?

Typically, if you're sleeping on your mattress every single day, washing your bedsheet once a week is more than enough.

Just make sure you air out your feet while asleep to keep them moist free [Meaning no socks at night} You may also want to disinfect your mattress by taking it outside, exposing it to the sun's UV rays now and then to kill the bacteria and fungi lurking in your bed.

Does athlete's foot come back?

You can treat athlete's foot just like most fungal skin infections with antifungal medications, but it often returns if proper care and good hygiene are not observed.

Key Takeaways:

Let us always do our due diligence before buying any antifungal medicines in the pharmacy. Some antifungal medications are not suited for the elderly and the very young. Always check the packet's guidelines or ask the pharmacist to answer some specific questions, such as potentially serious drug interactions if you are currently taking medications for other health issues.

You can also try using some natural home remedies to facilitate the antifungal activity of medications. These natural remedies can help hasten to heal and alleviate some of the discomforts. But bear in mind that alternative treatments cannot be relied on exclusively under certain conditions.

If you have severe infections, diabetes, or a compromised immune system, it is always recommended to consult your health provider before undergoing any type of treatment.

References:

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