

# Ringworm of the Skin and Scalp

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Ringworm is a common childhood skin disease that is a fungus infection. This often can be spread to children by a pet or another child that is infected with ringworm. Ringworm gets its name from the ring-shaped rash that appears on the skin.

## Ringworm of the Skin

Ringworm of the skin, also known as tinea corporis, is a fungus infection that can occur anywhere on the skin. Ringworm appears as a ring-shaped pink patch on the skin. The patch is usually .5 to 1 inch in size. The area is usually somewhat scaly with raised borders and a clear center. The area will slowly get larger in size and may itch. Other rashes can mimic tinea. It is contagious if direct skin-to-skin contact occurs before treatment is started. After 48 hours of treatment, the ringworm is usually considered no longer contagious. The rash may take up to four weeks to clear.

## Ringworm of the Scalp

Ringworm of the scalp, also known as tinea capitis, is a fungus infection of the scalp, involving hair follicles. The scalp may have round patches of hair loss that will slowly increase in size. Scaling, mild itching and secondary infection may occur on the scalp. The fungus can be spread by combs, brushes, hats, barrettes, seat backs, pillows and bath towels.

## Treatment

Ringworm of the skin is treated with an antifungal cream, as recommended by a child's primary healthcare provider. If there is no improvement or the condition worsens, the child should return to his or her healthcare provider.

Antifungal creams are not an effective treatment for ringworm of the scalp. The cream cannot get deep into the hair roots where the fungus is living. Ringworm of the scalp usually requires several weeks of an oral antifungal medication. Hair regrowth will occur, but may take up to six to 12 weeks after treatment. Follow your school policy or local health department for recommendations for returning to school. Generally once children with either type of ringworm are on antifungal medication for 24 hours, they are not contagious and can return to school.

If you suspect a student in your school has ringworm, here are a few helpful tips:

- Notify that student's parents and ask them to contact the child's primary healthcare provider for diagnosis and treatment.
- Encourage good handwashing techniques among all children and adults.
- Prohibit the sharing of personal items such as hair care articles, towels and clothing, including the "dress-up" corner for young children.

## Resources

Dermatophytes – CDC

[cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/ringworm/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/ringworm/index.html)