

ATHLETE'S FOOT

Red, itchy patches and white flaking skin indicate Athlete's foot.



WHAT IS IT?

We have naturally occurring fungi and bacteria on our skin. When these fungi are able to excessively multiply, you end up with an infection. People who have particularly sweaty feet either naturally or through

exercising (hence 'Athlete's Foot') or use public bathing areas are most at risk as these wet and warm conditions are the best for fungal cell replication.

DIAGNOSIS

A very common presentation is rawness, redness and itching between the fourth and fifth toes. Athlete's foot also is commonly seen as a 'moccasin' distribution of red, flaky and itchy skin.

To diagnose, normally a visual identification is sufficient. However if treatment is not working your GP might want to send some skin scrapings to a lab for microscopic analysis.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Usually, athlete's foot can be treated effectively with anti-fungal medications. These can be purchased from a pharmacy and are available as creams, sprays and powders. For more severe infections, prescribed tablets from your GP might be required.

These medications should be used according to their instructions and advice from a pharmacist, podiatrist or GP should be taken before use. Usually you need to use the creams for one to two weeks after symptoms subside to treat the infection successfully. The most important part of treating

athlete's foot is maintaining excellent foot hygiene. This includes washing your feet with soap and water and drying thoroughly in between your toes. Avoid sharing your towel and wash it regularly to prevent the spread of the infection. Wearing clean socks every day and even changing your socks and shoes more regularly will help to make sure that your feet remain as dry as possible. It is also important to treat your shoes with sprays or powders to reduce the number of fungal spores in the footwear. Overnight, shoes should be opened up to allow them to dry.



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