

Ringworm Fact Sheet

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is a skin infection caused not by a worm but by a fungus. Ringworm occurs worldwide but is more common in hot and humid climates.

How do people and animals become infected with ringworm?

People and animals get ringworm through contact with the skin or fur of an infected animal or by touching objects that are contaminated with the fungus, such as blankets and towels. Ringworm is rarely transmitted person to person.

Who are at risk of getting ringworm?

People who have close contact with infected animals such as dogs and cats, especially puppies or kittens, or rats are more likely to get ringworm. Persons who have a weakened immune system are at greater risk of becoming infected.

What are the symptoms of ringworm in people?

Symptoms of ringworm first appear 4-14 days after being exposed. The most common symptoms include:

- Itchy skin
- Ring-shaped rash
- Red, scaly, cracked skin
- Hair loss

The red circular rash may occur anywhere on the body, but mostly frequently occur on the scalp, the face, the neck, and the groin. The lesions might also become crusted over or filled with pus, and the affected hair might fall out.

What are the symptoms of ringworm in pets?

Some animals may carry the fungus on their skin and fur but show no signs of illness. However, the most common signs that pets have ringworm are:

- Areas of hair loss with red, crusting, or scaling skin
- Brittle, broken fur, and nails

What should I do if I think I have ringworm?

Discuss your health concerns with your healthcare provider. If ringworm is suspected, your healthcare provider may test skin scrapings for the fungus and may prescribe antifungal medication for treatment.

What should I do if I think my pet has ringworm?

Many skin conditions can resemble ringworm. Because diagnosis cannot be made simply by appearance of the red circular rash, it is important for your veterinarian to examine and test your pet. If ringworm is diagnosed, your veterinarian may prescribe medication such as shampoos, dips, creams or antifungal pills and recommend clipping the pet's fur short.

Other things you should do:

- Isolate the infected pet from other pets in the household until treatment is completed (This may take several weeks).
- Limit human contact with the pet to those activities necessary for its feeding and care. Persons at elevated risk for infection (children, elderly, and immunocompromised) should avoid contact completely with the infected pet until treatment is completed.
- Wear long sleeves when you handle animals with ringworm, and always wash your hands afterward.
- Monitor other pets in the household for illness and consult your veterinarian if you notice hair loss or skin lesions on other pets.
- Disinfect the area where your pets spend time, including surfaces and bedding, with chlorine bleach diluted 1:10 (1/4 cup in 1 gallon of water).

How do I protect my pet from being infected with ringworm?

- Keep your pet away from unfamiliar animals. Do not allow other animals into your house.
- Avoid bathing your pet too often. Excessive bathing removes natural defenses in/on animals' skin.
- Bring your pet to the veterinarian for regular check-ups

How do I protect myself from getting ringworm?

- Wash your hands with soap and water after any contact with your pet. Ensure that your children also wash their hands after playing with pets.
- Vacuum areas of your home where your pet commonly visits to remove fur or skin that may be contaminated.
- Launder pet bedding regularly.

Where can I get more information about ringworm?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has information available on their [ringworm webpage](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/diseases/ringworm.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/diseases/ringworm.html>) and [fungal diseases webpage](http://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/ringworm/risk-prevention.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/fungal/diseases/ringworm/risk-prevention.html>).

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