Waukesha County
Public Health Division
Fact Sheet

Athlete's Foot
(tinea pedis)

What is Athlete's Foot?

Athlete's Foot is a fungal infection of the feet that usually occurs between the toes.

Who gets Athlete's Foot?

Athlete's Foot is most common among teenage and adult males. It is uncommon in women and in children under the age of 12. If a child has symptoms of athlete's foot, it is most likely some other skin condition.

How is Athlete's Foot spread?

Athlete's Foot is spread through indirect or direct contact in public environments such as; contaminated floors, dressing rooms, shower stalls, swimming pool locker rooms, etc.

What are the symptoms of Athlete's Foot?

Athlete's Foot causes a flaking, scaling or cracking of the skin that could sometimes be itchy and sometimes develop a red rash. Athlete's Foot is mostly found between the toes, but it may spread to other parts of the foot. Some people find their skin on the foot becomes very sore and even bleeds a little, blisters may also appear.

How soon do symptoms appear?

It is unknown how soon symptoms occur following an exposure.

When and for how long is a person able to spread Athlete's Foot?

A person will be able to spread Athlete's Foot for as long as they have it themselves.

Does past infection with Athlete's Foot make a person immune?

Past infections with Athlete's Foot do not make a person immune to it.

Is there a treatment for Athlete's Foot?

Over-the-counter powders or ointments containing an antifungal ingredient can be used. In severe cases, contact a physician. Expose feet to air as much as possible by wearing footwear such as sandals.

What can a person or community do to prevent the spread of Athlete's Foot?

By practicing good foot hygiene, prevention of Athlete's Foot can be controlled. Daily washing with soap and water, carefully drying the feet especially between toes and by changing socks and shoes regularly will decrease moisture that aids in fungal growth. Regular use of a dusting powder or spray containing an active fungicide on the feet and particularly between the toes is helpful. It is also important for a person with a fungal infection to thoroughly rinse the bath or shower after use, to wear 'flip-flops' when changing in communal places and to not wear other people's shoes or slippers. When an epidemic has occurred, floors of locker rooms and shower areas should be disinfected with a fungicidal agent such as cresol.