# Candidiasis, Fungal Infections, Ringworm, Yeast Infections

Ringworm infection is a fungal infection. It usually infects the skin and mucous membranes (like the membranes that line the mouth). It has nothing to do with worms. A fungus is an organism (kind of like a germ) that lives on dead cells (the outer layer of skin, hair and nails). It does not go deeper than the surface of the skin. It can involve the entire body. It can spread from infected humans, soil and pets. The medical term for this fungus is Tinea. Tinea is a group of infections of the skin, nails or hair caused by fungal organisms. They often cause a red, round, itchy rash. Types are named by location and include an infection of the skin (*Tinea versicolor*), ringworm (*Tinea corporis*), athlete's foot (*Tinea pedis*), ringworm of the scalp (*Tinea capitis*) and jock itch (*Tinea cruris*).

Infections usually grow on our bodies where it is warm and moist. This is the reason it is found under the breasts, in skin folds and between the toes, among other places. This organism is normally found on our skin and only causes problems when it starts to overgrow in conditions it favors or likes. Candidiasis is commonly found in the vagina.

## SYMPTOMS

- Itching.
- Rash.
- Irritation.
- Swelling.
- Blisters.
- Cracking and peeling of the skin.
- Thick, dry, ragged and discolored toenails.

Intertriginous infections, like those infections under the breast and in skin folds, are the most common type. These also occur under the arms, and in the groin or belly button (*umbilicus*). The infection usually shows up as a red itchy rash which is often weepy and damp.

## SOME OF THE CAUSES OF THESE INFECTIONS ARE:

- Antibiotics. These kill the normal germs (*bacteria*) on the skin, so yeasts can overgrow.
- Steroid use. This weakens (*depresses*) the immune response or the body's ability to fight infection.
- Being very overweight (*obese*).
- Poor immune state and problems with the immune system.
- Immunosuppressive therapy. This include cancer or organ transplant drugs.
- Pregnancy.
- Diabetes mellitus and other glandular problems or serious medical illness.
- Going barefoot in public locker rooms, saunas and showers.
- Contact from pets.
- Contact from other infected humans.
- Contact with infected soil.
- AIDS.

## DIAGNOSIS

Your caregiver can usually diagnose this infection on exam. Sometimes, scrapings of the skin are done to look for the cause under a microscope or to get cultures of the germ.

## TREATMENT

- Over-the-counter (OTC) medications are available for treating this problem.
- It is important to keep the areas clean and dry. Getting rid of the conditions which allowed the fungus to

start growing is often a cure or fix.
- Areas which have lost skin color (*pigment*) may not get color back until the fungus is clear.
- For frequent or recurrent candidiasis infections of the vagina, use a anti fungus vaginal suppository or vaginal cream 2 times a week, or as directed.

## HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Fungal infections may be treated with over-the-counter medications, topical creams, ointments or oral medications. Ask your caregiver or pharmacist. Call your caregiver if your OTC treatment is not working.
- If you are using a cream or ointment, wash infected skin and dry it completely before applying the cream.
- If your pet has the same infection, have it treated by your veterinarian.
- **Do not** wear other people's cloths or shoes.
- Keep your feet, areas under your breasts, your belly button and groin areas dry.
- Wear cotton or wool socks.
- **Do not** wear tight clothing.
- Change your socks often if your feet sweat.
- **Do not** wear shoes made of vinyl or rubber.

The infection may return because the causative organism is normally found on the skin or the treatment was not strong or long enough.

## SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The ringworm patch (*fungus*) continues to spread after 7 days of treatment.
- The rash is not gone in 4 weeks. Fungal infections are slow to respond to treatment. Some redness (*erythema*) may remain for several weeks after the fungus is gone.
- The area becomes red, warm, tender and swollen beyond the patch. (This may be a secondary bacterial infection).
- An oral temperature above 100º F (37.8º C) develops.
- You develop painful urination.
- You develop pain with sexual intercourse.
- You develop blisters in the area of the infection.
- You develop intestinal problems.
- You develop vaginal bleeding and it is not time for your menstrual period.

## MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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