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Tinea Pedis

Definition

Tinea pedis, otherwise known as Athlete's foot, is a fungus infection of the foot.

Description

The term Tinea describes a group of fungal infections caused by fungi of different varieties. Particular varieties of fungi have a preference for specific areas of the body. In Tinea pedis, the fungus invades the outer layers of the skin, especially between the third and fourth toes.

Tinea pedis is caused by organisms called Trichophyton mentagrophytes, T. mentagrophytes and Epidermophyton floccosum. Initially it attacks the web of skin between the 3rd and 4th toes and then may progress to other areas of the feet including the soles and the heels. The skin between the toes can bleed and become dry, scaly, cracked and tender. When the infection is between the toes, the skin usually peels and itches, in some cases to the point of bleeding. Sometimes the infected skin area becomes cracked and moist, particularly if the patient wears socks and shoes continually.

Various bacteria, e.g., Streptococci, may establish in these areas causing weeping and a bad smell. These conditions can be an ideal environment for infection. Another problem can be a candida infection. If good bacteria are destroyed by antibiotics, radiation or drugs, the candida may spread. Sometimes the infection may cover the foot, and eventually a toe nail. If this happens, the nail may change in shape and the horny layer of the nail may become thickened.

Tinea pedis is transferred from person to person easily via skin scales shed from the infection. They cling to items of clothing such as socks. Other items which may also be carriers of the fungus include towels, shoes and moist floors such as a communal showers. The floors of public toilets may also be contaminated. Wear shoes if possible in these areas.

Treatment options

As with any condition your Doctor should be consulted to diagnose and treat this condition. Ask your Doctor about the latest advice on this ailment. The affected area will be sore, probably

Suggested solutions

General

» Antifungal cream, powder or spray

Natural

» Tea tree oil (applied externally)



swollen and may have a bad smell.

Your Doctor will recommend oral or topical medications, depending on the severity of the condition.

Diet hints

It is important to support the immune system. Some dietary suggestions include-

- whole grains, raw fruits and fresh vegetables. These provide antioxidants which may help stimulate the immune system.
- Try to avoid excess sugar and white flour products.
- Try to eat natural, live yoghurt. These provide acidophilus which help regulate bacteria levels.
- Include garlic in the diet. Garlic is a potent antifungal agent.

Vitamins/minerals/herbs

- Echinacea has been shown to have antifungal properties and may enhance immune function.
- Garlic has antifungal properties.
- Golden seal is believed to be an effective antifungal herb and may assist in preventing secondary bacterial infections.
- Pau d'arco herb is believed to have effective antifungal and antibacterial properties.
- Tea tree oil has been shown to be an effective treatment for Athlete's foot, due to its antifungal properties.
- Acidophilus contains friendly bacteria such as Lactobacillus acidophilus and bifidus which can help fight fungus and prevent its overgrowth.

Aromatherapy

The listed essential oils are suggested for the health management of Tinea. The most specific oils are shown in capitals.

MYRRH, Patchouli, TEA TREE

Application

DIRECT: Blend any single listed essential oil or combination of essential oils - 5 drops (total) to 10mL (1/3 fl oz) vegetable carrier oil ie: Sweet Almond, Apricot Kernel, Jojoba. After cleansing, apply topically to Tinea affected area.

Notes

Ordinary washing powder does not kill this fungus although washing in very hot water will. Clothing, e.g., socks, should be cleansed with a suitable disinfectant in the water. It is possible, if this is not done re-infection can take place.

Use caution when standing barefoot in an area that is used by the public if the floor is damp. The fungus grows in these areas and it is easy to become infected. Summer time, when the temperature is higher, is the worst time for Tinea. Prevention is the best form of treatment. Always dry your body thoroughly after bathing, especially between the toes. Change socks and underwear after exercise or sweating. Wear less constricting shoes for exercise or better still wear no shoes when possible. Use powder to absorb excess perspiration.

Pharmacist's advice

Ask your Pharmacist for advice.

- 1) Follow the Diet Hints.
- 2) Wear suitable footwear in communal showers (swimming pools, gymnasiums etc), to avoid contracting Tinea.
- 3) Ask your Pharmacist to recommend a suitable antifungal preparation. These are available as

creams, powders and sprays and the choice of preparation is usually just a matter of personal preference. Always apply your antifungal preparation directly to the lesion and the surrounding 4 to 6cm of skin. Treatment should be continued for at least one week after lesions clear.

4) Always dry well between the toes and use **an antifungal preparation** immediately after a bath or shower. Wear no shoes when possible.

5) Keep floors as clean as possible.

6) It is a good idea to alternate shoes every 2 or 3 days to allow them to dry out.

7) Wear cotton socks and change these daily.

8) If the diet is inadequate consider some supplements.

DISCLAIMER : This information is an educational aid only. It is not intended to replace medical advice for individual conditions or treatments. Talk to your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or naturopath before following any medical regimen to see whether it is safe and effective for you.