

Preventing and managing tinea pedis: Tips for healthy feet.

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Introduction

Tinea pedis, more commonly known as athlete's foot, is a fungal infection that affects the skin on the feet, typically between the toes and on the soles. It is one of the most common skin conditions worldwide and is often caused by the fungus *Trichophyton* or *Epidermophyton* [1].

Tinea pedis thrives in warm, moist environments, making areas like public showers, locker rooms, and swimming pools common sites for transmission. While athlete's foot is treatable, it can be uncomfortable and persistent if not managed properly. This article discusses practical tips for both preventing and managing tinea pedis to maintain healthy feet [2].

Tinea pedis is a superficial fungal infection that primarily affects the skin of the feet, often leading to itching, burning, redness, and peeling. The infection typically begins in the spaces between the toes, where moisture can accumulate, but it can spread to other parts of the feet as well. In more severe cases, tinea pedis can cause cracking and ulceration, making the feet sore and more susceptible to secondary bacterial infections [3].

Fungal infections like tinea pedis are contagious and can be spread through direct contact with infected skin or contaminated surfaces. For example, walking barefoot in public areas such as gym locker rooms, communal showers, or swimming pools can increase the risk of infection. However, with proper care, tinea pedis can be effectively managed and prevented [4].

The most effective way to prevent tinea pedis is to keep your feet clean and dry. Fungi thrive in warm, moist environments, so it's crucial to maintain good foot hygiene to reduce the likelihood of infection. Public spaces like gyms, locker rooms, and swimming pools are prime environments for the spread of tinea pedis. Fungi can survive on damp surfaces, making it easy to contract the infection by walking barefoot in these areas. Here are some tips to protect your feet in public spaces [5].

If you do contract tinea pedis, prompt treatment is key to preventing the infection from worsening or spreading. Over-the-counter topical antifungal medications, such as creams, sprays, or powders, are the first line of treatment for most cases [6].

In more severe or persistent cases of tinea pedis, or if topical treatments do not provide relief, a healthcare provider may

prescribe oral antifungal medications, such as terbinafine, itraconazole, or fluconazole. These medications work systemically to treat the infection from the inside out and are typically used for a few weeks to ensure the infection is fully cleared [7].

Oral antifungals are especially effective for cases of tinea pedis that affect large areas of the foot or that have become resistant to topical treatments. However, they may come with side effects, so it's important to follow the guidance of a healthcare provider when using them [8].

Even after treating tinea pedis, it's important to take steps to prevent the infection from coming back. Fungal infections like athlete's foot are notorious for recurring, so maintaining a consistent foot care routine is essential. While most cases of tinea pedis can be managed with over-the-counter treatments and good foot hygiene, there are times when it's necessary to seek medical advice [9].

If the infection spreads to other parts of the body, becomes significantly painful, or does not improve with over-the-counter treatments, consult a dermatologist. In rare cases, tinea pedis can lead to more serious complications, such as bacterial infections, so it's important to seek medical help if symptoms worsen [10].

Conclusion

Tinea pedis, or athlete's foot, is a common but preventable fungal infection that can cause significant discomfort and inconvenience. By following proper foot hygiene, wearing appropriate footwear, and using antifungal treatments, most individuals can effectively prevent and manage this condition. Keeping your feet dry, clean, and protected from fungal exposure in public areas is essential in maintaining foot health. If you experience persistent symptoms or complications, don't hesitate to consult a healthcare provider for more advanced treatment options. By staying proactive, you can keep your feet healthy, free from infection, and ready to step forward with confidence.

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Received: 1-May-2025, Manuscript No. aarcd-25-164970; Editor assigned: 5-May-2025, PreQC No. aarcd-25-164970 (PQ); Reviewed: 17-May-2025, QC No. aarcd-25-164970; Revised: 24-May-2025, Manuscript No. aarcd-25-164970 (R); Published: 31-May-2025, DOI: 10.35841/aarcd-8.3.268.

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Citation: Sullivan B. Preventing and managing tinea pedis: Tips for healthy feet. *Res Clin Dermatol*. 2025;8(3):268.