

This is a fungal infection, usually between the toes or under the arch of the foot.

What to look for

- Itching and irritation between the toes, this area may peel and crack.
- rash and redness in this area;
- dry, flaking skin on the soles of the feet.
- Unpleasant foot odour.
- Whitish, brittle, flaky toenails in severe cases.

Athlete's foot is a common fungal infection, and you don't have to be an athlete to get it. Athlete's foot is caused by feet enclosed in shoes consistently.

CAUSES

The main cause is the failure to observe necessary personal hygiene as well as not drying the area between the toes adequately after bathing.

People who suffer from Athletes Foot that perspire frequently are prone to develop this complaint. The situation can become worse from wearing certain types of plastic shoes which do not allow the foot to breath.

When the moist area between the toes becomes sweaty, it is a breeding ground for fungus. The fungus likes to live there and it digests the dead skin that the body sheds each day. Once the fungus starts eating the dead skin it may cause inflammation and damage to the living skin.

It is often spread by using the showers and toilets at the gym or changing rooms after sporting activity.

Traditional Treatment

You should treat athlete's foot at the first sign of itchy feet or redness between your toes. Most cases of athlete's foot can be cured with over-the-counter products and basic good hygiene.

Wash and dry your feet thoroughly morning and evening, change your socks or stockings daily, and don't wear the same shoes day after day. Sprinkle anti-fungal powder on your feet and in your shoes daily. Expose your feet to sunlight and air as much as possible. Keep your feet dry so avoid nylon socks and stockings.

Alternative/Natural Treatments

- **Aromatherapy** - try 2 drops of Tea Tree oil, 2 drops of Myrrh in 15g of base cream. Mix the oils into the base cream, and apply to the affected area twice a day. Also foot baths with sandalwood and tea tree oil. Patchouli and tea tree oil in a base cream.
- **Herbal Therapies** - a footbath of red clover & hot water can help. Also try aloe, calendula, comfrey compresses. Always seek professional advice for your particular condition/s before taking herbal mixtures.
- **Homoeopathy** - to soothe inflammation; try an over-the-counter preparation containing Calendula. You may recommend Graphite for this condition.
- **Personal Care** - Soak your infected feet in warm, salted water (1 tsp salt per cup) for 5 to 10 minutes every day. Dry your feet thoroughly, then apply a bi-carb soda paste between your toes. You may prefer using an over-the-counter antifungal powder, cream, or spray.

PREVENTION

- Always wear sandals, thongs while using communal areas
- Wear cotton socks, and shoes that breathe;
- Never share shoes, socks, or towels.
- If you get athlete's foot, wash your socks and towels in the hottest water possible—or boil them.
- Always keep feet dry during the day
- Showers at home should be cleaned after use to avoid spreading the infection to other household members
- Do not walk around barefoot as this can also spread the infection.