

Athlete's foot

This is a common fungal infection which affects mainly the feet although it can spread to other parts of the body. It thrives in warm or moist environments such as changing rooms and swimming pools and is more likely to occur in the summer months.

People who live in a hot climate or often visit humid places such as swimming baths are at greater risk of contracting this disease. Contrary to the name, you don't have to be an athlete to develop this condition.

Causes of athlete's foot

It develops in warm, humid places such as communal changing areas or swimming baths. It also develops in tight fitting shoes and socks which, due to the heat and moisture generated within, is an ideal breeding ground for this fungus.

This fungus exists on dead hair, nail and skin tissue which multiplies in warm and moist temperatures. It causes a range of symptoms such as cracked, peeling skin which is a common feature of this disease.

Is there more than one type of athlete's foot?

The answer to that is yes. There are 3 forms of this condition which are:

- Interdigital athlete's foot
- Moccasin athlete's foot
- Vesicular athlete's foot

Interdigital athlete's foot

This is the most common version. It develops between the toes, usually the two smallest and causes an itchy, burning sensation. This can spread to the rest of the foot.

Moccasin athlete's foot

This version develops on the sole of the foot but often spreads to the sides. It starts with some mild itchiness and flaking but soon worsens, to leave thick, crusty skin which cracks during movement.

Vesicular athlete's foot

This is the least well known version. It consists of small fluid filled blisters which develop on the bottom of the foot although they can appear on the heel, between the toes or even the top of the foot.

Symptoms of athlete's foot

If you have ever suffered from this then you will be very familiar with the itching, burning feeling between the toes or the sole of the foot. Other characteristics include:

- Cracked, peeling skin
- Scaling on the sole of the foot or heels
- Blisters
- Red, swollen appearance
- Soft skin which gradually breaks down

Diagnosing athlete's foot

Your GP will examine the skin of your foot, looking for obvious signs such as cracked, peeling skin and an itchy sensation. He or she will scrape the infected skin which is then examined under a microscope. The aim is to see if you have developed a fungal infection.

Treatment for athlete's foot

There are various over the counter remedies available at your local pharmacy. But if you have a serious case which requires medical treatment then your GP will prescribe a topical medicine.

A topical medicine such as an antifungal cream will help as will a few preventative measures such as ensuring your feet are kept clean and dry. Do this whenever you are in a moist environment such as a changing room or a swimming pool and remember to dry your feet thoroughly afterwards.

Other preventative measures include wearing shoes and socks that allow your feet to breathe and using a foot powder which is specially designed for athlete's foot.

Other fungal infections include [ringworm](#) and yeast infections