

## Offshore Fitness Forum

### Athlete's Foot

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The following information has been compiled from the Mayo Clinic web site at [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com).

**What is it?** Athlete's foot, also called tinea pedis, is a fungal infection that develops in the moist areas between your toes and sometimes on other parts of your foot. Athlete's foot is the most common type of fungal infection and usually causes itching, stinging and burning.

Athlete's foot is closely related to other fungal infections such as ringworm and jock itch. A group of mold-like fungi called dermatophytes causes these infections. These microscopic organisms are normal inhabitants of your skin, and their growth stays in check as long as your skin is clean and dry.

However, dermatophytes thrive in damp, close environments such as tight shoes that squeeze the toes together and create warm, moist areas between them. Damp socks and shoes and warm, humid conditions also favor the organisms' growth.

**How does it spread?** Athlete's foot is contagious and can be spread by contact with an infected person or with contact with contaminated surfaces, such as towels, floors and shoes.

**What are the symptoms?** You probably won't have them all, but they include:

- Itching, stinging and burning between your toes
- Itching, stinging and burning on the soles of your feet
- Itchy blisters
- Cracking and peeling skin, especially between your toes and on the soles of your feet
- Excessive dryness of the skin on the bottoms or sides of the feet
- Toenails that are thick, crumbly, ragged, discolored or pulling away from the nail bed

**How do I keep from getting Athlete's Foot?** Keep your feet dry, especially between your toes. Wear sandals to let your feet air out as much as possible when you're not on duty.

- Go with natural materials. Wear socks that are made of natural material, such as cotton or wool, or a synthetic fiber designed to draw moisture away from your feet.
- Change socks and stockings regularly. If your feet sweat a lot, change your socks twice a day.

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- **Wear light, well-ventilated shoes. Avoid shoes made of synthetic material, such as vinyl or rubber.**
- **Alternate pairs of shoes. Don't wear the same pair every day so that you give your shoes time to dry between wearings.**
- **Wear shower shoes in communal showers.**
- **Treat your feet. Use powder, preferably antifungal, on your feet daily.**
- **Don't share shoes. Sharing risks spreading a fungal infection.**

**What do I do if I think I have athlete's foot?** Although contagious, athlete's foot often can be treated with over-the-counter antifungal medications. If the condition does not improve or if you have any concerns, consult a medical professional.

**Athlete's foot between the toes**



PHOTO : CDC/LUCILLE K. GEORGE, PH.D.

**(Photo by Lucille K George PH.D.)**

**Athlete's foot on side of foot**



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Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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