

In Step

Athlete's Foot

by Dr. Arthur Lukoff, D.P.M.

It's summer time, which means warmth and humidity. Its the perfect time of year to get athlete's foot. Athlete's foot is a skin disease caused by a fungus, usually occurring between the toes.

The warmth and dampness of areas around swimming pools, showers, and locker rooms are great places to pick up the fungus that causes the infection. Because the infection was common among athletes who used these facilities frequently, the term "athlete's foot" became popular.

The signs of athlete's foot, singly or combined, are drying skin, itching, scaling, inflammation, and blisters. Blisters often lead to cracking of the skin. When blisters break, small raw areas of tissue are exposed, causing pain and swelling. Itching and burning may increase as the infection spreads.

Athlete's foot may spread to the soles of the feet and to the toenails. It can be spread to other parts of the body, notably the groin and underarms, by those who scratch the infection and then touch themselves elsewhere.

It is not easy to prevent athlete's foot because it is usually contracted in dressing rooms, showers, and swimming pool locker rooms where bare feet come in contact with the fungus. However, you can do much to prevent infection by practicing good foot hygiene. Daily washing of the feet with soap and water; drying carefully, especially between the toes; and changing shoes and hose regularly to decrease moisture, help prevent the fungus from infecting the feet. Also helpful is daily use of a quality foot powder.

Avoid walking barefoot; use shower shoes. Reduce perspiration by using talcum powder. Wear light and airy shoes. Wear socks that keep your feet dry, and change them frequently if you perspire heavily.

If you are prone to athlete's foot, drying between your toes with a hair dryer goes a long way to keeping the infection at bay.



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