

Scalp Ringworm

(Tinea capitis)

What is scalp ringworm?

Scalp ringworm is an infection of the scalp. It is caused by a fungus, not a worm. It is common in young school-aged children, but it is also seen in other age groups.



How is it diagnosed?

Scalp ringworm is diagnosed by physical exam. Some skin on the scalp is scraped. Scalp hair may also be taken. The scrapings are looked at under a microscope. Other lab tests may also be done.

How did my child get it?

The infection can be spread from one person to another through close contact (contagious).

- It can spread where children play together such as the home, school, or daycare.
- Sometimes the infection is due to contact with animals.
- Your child should not share combs, brushes, barrettes, hair ribbons, hats, sport helmets, or pillows with others.

How does it affect my child?

Scalp ringworm may start as white flakes on the scalp. It is often thought to be dandruff. There may also be small pimples on the scalp, redness, itching, and hair loss. The hair loss normally gets better with treatment. It may take the hair 3 to 6 months to grow back.

How is it treated?

Medicine:

Scalp ringworm is treated with anti-fungal medicine. There are a number of these medicines. The medicine is given by mouth. One of the most common is Griseofulvin. This medicine must be taken for eight weeks or longer for scalp infections. It must be taken with food containing fat. The fat in the food helps the body to absorb the medicine. Foods that have fat include whole milk, ice cream, and peanut butter. It may take 2 to 3 months to treat this infection.

Special shampoo:

A special shampoo may also be used to wash the hair. The shampoo should be used 2 to 3 times a week for several weeks. The shampoo does not cure the infection, but it may help keep it from spreading to others.

What about school or daycare?

Once your child is taking medicine and using special shampoo, they will be able to go back to school or daycare.

Special instructions when your child has scalp ringworm

All members of the household need to be examined and treated. This will keep scalp ringworm from being spread.

- Wash all combs and brushes with hot, soapy water.
- Be sure each family member has their own:
 - Comb and brush.
 - Washcloth and towel.
- Do **not** use other hair products, such as hairsprays or creme rinses. This may decrease the effect of the shampoo. When braiding the hair, make the braids loose.
- Report scalp ringworm to the school nurse, teacher, or day care provider.
- Teach your children how scalp ringworm is spread.
- Teach your child to not share barrettes, hats, combs, brushes or pillows.
- Since some types of ringworm are spread by animal contact. You may need to have your pet checked by a veterinarian.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.