

Athlete's foot is a common often recurrent problem. Some people are more prone to it than others and may have more severe symptoms - stinging, itching and burning between toes and on the sole of the foot.

The diagnosis is made on the clinical examination and by identifying fungus on a skin scraping.

Assuming you have been correctly diagnosed, a number of effective topical treatments are available as ointment, lotion, powder, or sprays. The most commonly used prescription medications are clotrimazole (Lotrimin) and terbinafine (Lamisil AT). With topical treatments, it's important to treat the area involved and the surrounding skin.

In cases where topical treatments don't work, oral medications can be prescribed. In rare cases, the oral medications have the risk of some serious side effects.

If you stop the treatment too soon. You could have a reinfection, which is not uncommon because the fungus spreads easily, especially in communal showers, locker rooms and fitness centers. You may need to be diligent to preventing recurrences. You can try:

- Wearing socks made from cotton, wool or synthetic fibers that wick away moisture, changing them twice a day. Heat and moisture can contribute to recurrences and reinfection.
- Wearing open-toed sandals help keep feet dry. One should avoid shoes made from synthetic materials.
- Alternating shoes so each pair has time to dry.
- Using over-the-counter absorbent foot powder containing an antifungal agent.
- Wearing sandals in communal showers to avoid reinfection.

Unchecked, athlete's foot can lead to secondary bacterial infections and skin breakdown.

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