



3 Mahoney Ave.  
Rutland, VT 05701  
(802) 773-3553  
www.rutlandskin.com  
Daniel P. McCauliffe, M.D.

# ***Tinea Pedis (Athlete's Foot)***

## ***What is tinea pedis?***

Tinea pedis is the medical term for athlete's foot disease. It is caused by a fungal infection of the skin. Sometimes the toenails are also infected. It usually presents as white patches between the toes that may be sore and as flaking red patches of skin on the bottoms and (or) sides of the feet and toes. Sometimes blisters may form. Wet or damp feet and genetic factors may predispose some people to get tinea pedis.

## ***How is it treated?***

Treatment is aimed at killing off the active infection and taking measures to prevent reinfection. There are a number of different antifungal products available that do not require a prescription. These include tolnaftate (e.g., Tinactin), miconazole (e.g., Lotrimin), and terbinafine (e.g., Lamisil). These products come in cream, lotion, spray and powder forms. You should treat the affected area until all signs of the infection have cleared. This usually takes 2 to 6 weeks.

## ***What can I do to prevent the infection from coming back?***

- 1) Dry your feet and between your toes well after bathing or swimming.
- 2) Avoid going barefoot in public places, particularly around pools, saunas and in showers.
- 3) Wear socks made of wicking fabric. This fabric wicks perspiration off the skin to the outside of the sock promoting dryness. Wicking fabric goes by different names including polypropylene and CoolMax®. Clothing made from this fabric is available at some department stores [K-Mart carries CoolMax socks, EMS ([www.ems.com](http://www.ems.com)), Dicks Sporting Goods ([www.dickssportinggoods.com](http://www.dickssportinggoods.com)), and other internet based retailers [([www.sierratradingpost.com](http://www.sierratradingpost.com)), ([www.roadrunnersports.com](http://www.roadrunnersports.com))].
- 4) Wear shoes that "breathe". Sandals and cloth shoes are better than leather, vinyl or rubber footwear. Boots and shoes made out of Gortex® are good at keeping your feet dry when the outside environment is wet, and "breathe" better than leather, vinyl or rubber footwear. Gortex® footwear can be found at the above mentioned sporting goods stores.
- 5) Apply a strong topical antiperspirant to the bottoms of your feet, including the spaces between your toes at bedtime (e.g., Certain Dri - available without a prescription, and Drysol - requires a prescription.) If your skin is red and tender, the antiperspirant may sting.
- 6) Apply athlete's foot powder on your feet, between your toes and in your shoes at least once weekly.
- 7) If you have a fungal toenail infection, see a dermatologist to get it treated, otherwise the fungus in the nails can spread and infect the skin on your feet. Unfortunately, the most effective treatments for toenail fungal infections require a prescription, and some require screening lab tests. However, some people have had success treating nail fungus with Vick's Vapor Rub or white vinegar soaks (See our separate handout for non-prescription treatments of nail fungus).

