

Athlete's Foot

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A number of different fungi can infect the skin and nails of toes. This infection may result in the condition known as athlete's foot. Generally, athlete's foot does not cause serious problems; however, the disruption of the skin barrier can be a source of significant infections in people with impaired blood flow to the feet, such as people with diabetes or impaired immune systems. Infections of the nails are more difficult to treat than those affecting only the skin.

What are the symptoms of athlete's foot? Symptoms of athlete's foot include a persistent, burning itch that often starts between the toes. The skin on the feet may be damp, soft, red, cracked, or peeling; the feet may also show patches of dead skin. The feet often have a strong or unusual smell, and sometimes small blisters occur on the feet.

How is it treated? The conventional treatment is to apply an antifungal powder, cream, or spray (e.g., clotrimazole [Desenex®, Lotrimin®], or tolnaftate [Tinactin®]) between the toes and on other affected areas. A drying powder can also be used inside the socks and shoes to help keep the feet dry during the day.