



# FieldHaven Feline Rescue

## **Mission**

*Educating our community on responsible pet ownership while providing safe haven for cats and kittens in transition to new lives in permanent homes.*

## **Ringworm FAQ**

We are providing you with this information on ringworm because there is a very slight possibility the cat or kitten you adopted today has been exposed to ringworm. At FieldHaven we do everything medically possible to ensure your new pet does not have ringworm. However, because ringworm can exist in the environment around all of us, we feel it is important to inform you of the remote possibility that your cat or kitten has been exposed to ringworm and could develop a ringworm blister.

### **What Is Ringworm?**

Worms don't cause ringworm. Rather, this superficial skin infection, also known as tinea, is caused by fungi called dermatophytes. Fungi are microscopic plants that can live off the dead tissues of your skin, hair, and nails, much like a mushroom can grow on the bark of a tree.

Ringworm is characterized by a red ring of small blisters or a red ring of scaly skin that grows outward as the infection spreads. Though children are especially susceptible to catching ringworm, it can affect adults as well.

### **What Causes It?**

Ringworm is caused by a fungus that grows on the skin. Once the fungus is established, it spreads out in rings. The center of the ring may clear up, while a new ring of infection develops at the edge of the old ring.

Children are most likely to get ringworm. Ringworm of the scalp can spread from child to child when children share hats, combs, or brushes. Ringworm of the body can be spread on towels, clothing, or sports equipment. Personal hygiene is important in preventing the spread of ringworm. Dogs and cats can be infected with ringworm, too, and they can pass it to people through direct contact.

### **What Are the Symptoms?**

Ringworm of the scalp:

- Dry, brittle hair or hair loss in patches.
- Severe itching.
- Red-ringed patch of small blisters or scaly skin.

Ringworm of the body:

- Red-ringed patch of small blisters or scaly skin.
- Severe itching.

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Call your doctor if you have a red-ringed skin infection, severe itching of the skin or scalp, a scaly rash or hair loss.

## How Do I Know If I Have It?

Your doctor will probably recognize ringworm's characteristic rash. However, he or she may also:

- Look at the infection with a special ultraviolet light that can detect traces of fluorescent materials that occur in a ringworm infection.
- Scrape an area of involved skin and look at the sample under the microscope.
- Take a culture to find out which fungus is causing the infection in order to select the most effective antifungal medicine.

## What Are the Treatments?

Your doctor may prescribe an antifungal medication. These drugs work to kill fungus and prevent it from coming back. You may spread the antifungal on your skin as a medicated shampoo, powder, cream or lotion; or you may take a pill so the medicine can spread throughout your body. Your doctor may prescribe a combination of these treatments.

Many antifungal medications, such as miconazole, are available over the counter at a lower dose and a less expensive price. Ask your doctor whether you can use one of these or whether prescription-strength medicine is necessary.

## How Can I Prevent Ringworm?

Good personal hygiene helps prevent the spread of ringworm. Teach your child to practice good hygiene and generally not to share combs, brushes, or hats. Children also shouldn't share towels, clothes or sports equipment that haven't been properly cleaned.

Ringworm also can be transmitted from an infected dog or cat, so avoid animals who look mangy or have bald spots in their coats. If you have an animal that you think may have ringworm, take it to your veterinarian for treatment.

Medically updated by [Cynthia Haines, MD](#), WebMD, August 2005.

SOURCES: American Academy of Family Physicians.

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