

Outdoor health tips from the Posse:

# Athlete’s foot

I used to believe that you had to be some kind of an athlete in order to get athlete’s foot. While I was always athletic and into sports like baseball and hockey, most of my time was spent fishing, hunting, and hiking, so I never worried about getting this affliction. I always thought it was something to be embarrassed about if you ever caught it.



**Mark Rackay**  
Tips from the Posse



**Unfortunately, it takes more than fancy running shoes to prevent athlete’s foot, and even more to get rid of it.** (Special to the Montrose Daily Press/Mark Rackay)

fantail, two different pills to take daily, and some cream to use for control of the itching. In just a short three months, my feet were back to normal and I vowed to never let that happen again, no matter how good the fishing is. I was the first non-athlete type to get athlete’s foot in my circle of friends.

Athlete’s foot is a fungal infection that commonly occurs in warm and humid weather, when it rains, or just about anytime your feet live in a wet environment. Anyone who has wet feet for prolonged periods of time can be susceptible to this fungal infection.

Tinea pedis, as it is medically referred to, usually begins between the toes. It is closely related to other fungal infections such as ringworm and jock itch. It can occur in people whose feet become sweaty while confined in tight-fitting shoes, such as hiking boots or running shoes. Athlete’s foot is very contagious and can be spread easily in locker rooms, towels or clothing.

Athlete’s foot usually starts with a scaly red rash. The rash usually begins in between the toes. The itching is often worse immediately after you take off your shoes and socks. I always found that nighttime was the worse for the itching.

Some types of athlete’s foot can cause

blisters and skin ulcers. One variety, called moccasin, causes chronic dryness and scaling on the soles of the feet that extends up the side of the foot. This variety is often mistaken for eczema.

The infection can affect both feet and spread to your hands and groin area, especially if you scratch at it or from your towel when you dry off after a shower. In my case, the infection even spread to my sides and armpits, so I must have had a real dose of it. The fungi associated with athlete’s foot can also infect your toenails. When it hits your nails, it can be a bear to get rid of because it often becomes resistant to treatment.

Athlete’s foot can often be self-treated with available over-the-counter medications. If you suspect you have a dose of it, look for ointments and sprays made by Desenex, Lamisil AT, Lotrimin and Tinactin. Follow the directions on the product labels and give it the allotted time each remedy recommends. Usually there is improvement in a few days but can take several weeks to clear.

For more extreme cases, and when the over-the-counter stuff won’t cut it, you better make an appointment with the doctor. He can give you prescrip-

tion strength topical medicines, as well as oral antifungal tablets. If the inflammation becomes painful, the doc may prescribe topical steroid medications.

If you suspect you have athlete’s foot, it would be best to address it seriously and right away because it can lead to complications. Mild complications can include an allergic reaction to the fungus, which can lead to painful blistering of the feet and hands. The fungal infection can recur after treatment.

In the event of a secondary infection, more severe complications can arise. This might include swelling of the feet, pain, drainage and a fever. All of these are signs of a secondary infection. This infection could extend to your lymph systems if not stopped.

Athlete’s foot is usually mild, but can be severe or turn severe. Sometimes it clears up quickly, while in others it can last a long time. Fungal infections can be very difficult to eliminate, especially when your feet live in a wet environment. Long-term treatment with antifungal medications may be necessary to keep the infection from returning.

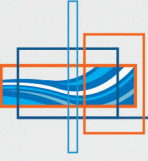
Several preventative measures can help, like washing your feet daily with soap and water, then drying thoroughly, especially between the toes. If your feet are in a wet environment, put antifungal powder on your feet every day.

On long hikes, change your socks daily, twice a day is better yet. Allow your feet to be exposed to the air to dry at rest times. Never wear the same pair of shoes or boots 2 days in a row. Give your shoes a chance to dry out completely between uses.

You don’t have to be an athlete to get athlete’s foot as I am living proof. If you suspect you have it, treat it right away. This is one infliction that won’t go away on its own. ●


*Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a director for the Montrose County Sheriff’s Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org*

*For outdoors or survival related questions or comments, feel free to contact him directly at his email elkhunter77@bresnan.net.*



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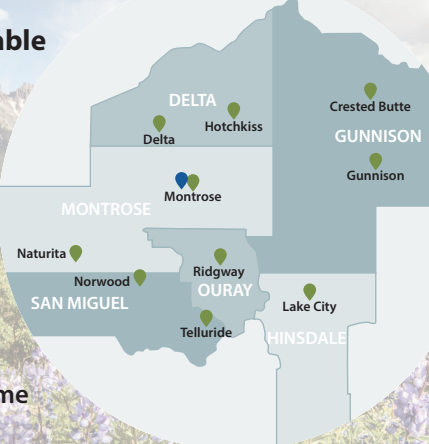
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