



Ringworm of the Scalp

Ringworm of the scalp is the most common fungus infection in children, and usually affects children from 2 to 10 years of age. Fewer than 5 percent of cases of ringworm of the scalp occur in adults. Most cases of ringworm involving the scalp are due to a fungus that is passed from person to person. Very few of today's fungal infections that involve the scalp are due to fungus from pets, as was the case a decade ago.

The fungus can be passed from fallen hairs, dandruff and shared combs, towels or hats. The fungal infection can begin as dandruff, areas of baldness, and/or areas of redness on the scalp with associated swelling and pus bumps. In some cases, enlarged lymph nodes in the neck may be felt.

The diagnosis of fungus infection is suspected by the appearance of the scalp and can be verified by fungal cultures. The fungal culture usually grows the fungus in three weeks. Meanwhile the child with ringworm of the scalp is contagious and other children should be kept from contacting the hair, combs, towels or hats of the affected patient. We feel that a child can attend school or play with other children during the first two weeks, if the head is entirely covered. In addition, all family members or close contact should be examined for the possibility of ringworm infection on the body or scalp.

Treatment of ringworm of the scalp involves an antifungal medication by mouth. In addition, medicated shampoos are often recommended (e.g. Selsen Blue, Head & Shoulders-selenium, or ketoconazole). It takes several weeks to see any response. If your child appears to be improving, **DO NOT STOP THE MEDICINE**, as it takes a full eight weeks to eradicate the fungus.

This is the medical opinion of Savannah River Dermatology. For additional information, please contact us at 706-691-7079.