

## Got an Itch? Act Fast--The Skin You Save May be Your Own

by Michelle Mellon

Okay, it's bad enough to be talking about "athlete's foot," right? That burning, itching, aching fungal infection that is the bane of locker rooms everywhere? Ever notice how those same adjectives are used to describe other bodily infections? Whoa, you say, let's not go there. Unfortunately, your hands already have. Remember? When you had to scratch or rub your feet and then you scratched under your arm or on your head or rubbed your eye or..well, you get the idea. ↓

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Truth is, fungal infections do not discriminate. If it's moist, warm, and dark, they are in heaven. And these fungi are tough fellows. Because they stick around longer, it is possible to spread your infection through contaminated sheets or clothing. Head, underarms, groin, skin--all are susceptible, and as a warm and sweaty athlete, you are fertile soil.

Fungi are not the only nasty things you can pick up. Aside from the obvious bacterial baddies, there are viral infections that abound as well. I began using the gym and shower at my office and eventually developed a plantar wart on the bottom of one of my feet. Never had one? Hope you don't. After reading about the options available through a podiatrist, I tried an over-the-counter removal remedy. Three months and much skin picking later, I was finally able to run without pain enough to play ultimate again.

If you spend a lot of time at swimming pools, shared showers, or in locker rooms (or are close to someone who does), take some precautions:

- Wash your feet daily

- Dry your feet thoroughly, especially between your toes
- Powder your feet if they sweat excessively
- Wear airy shoes or change & wash socks and pantyhose often
- Wear shower shoes in shared areas where you are not in control of the cleaning routine

As an ultimate player or other athlete:

- Keep a towel on hand to wipe down during long practices or tournaments
- Change your socks between games as needed
- Air your feet out during byes or other long breaks
- If you won't be showering soon, keep spare clothes handy to change into after play is over for the day (don't forget dry underwear!)

In either case, see a podiatrist if you are not sure of your problem, or if it doesn't go away with over-the-counter treatments. For more information on common foot ailments,

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