Managing a Pet With Ringworm

What is dermatophytosis, and how did my pet get it?
Dermatophytosis is a fungal infection of the skin, also known as ringworm. It is highly contagious to other animals as well as people. Pets often become infected through direct contact with an infected animal or exposure to a contaminated environment.

How can I protect my family and other pets?
Thoroughly cleaning the environment to remove infected hairs and dander is extremely important. Infected hairs can stay infectious for up to 18 months. During this time, they can be a source of exposure for family members and other pets or cause reinfection of the affected pet.

Your affected pet should be kept isolated during the treatment period to prevent infecting others and to make cleaning easier. Keeping your pet in a small room that can be cleaned easily will help with the rigorous process.

Please reach out to a physician if any family members are already infected or immunocompromised, as they are more susceptible.

How should I clean my home?
Aggressive cleaning is necessary. The disinfecting process should be performed at least once (preferably twice) a week until your pet is cured.

- Vacuum thoroughly. Anywhere hair and dust can accumulate is a potential source of infection, including the car. Dispose of vacuumed material.
- For hard floors, use damp mopping or dust with electrostatic cleaning products (e.g., Swiffer) to prevent stirring fungal spores up into the air.
- Wash all hard surfaces (including pet carriers) with a detergent followed by a disinfectant—either bleach or a product containing accelerated hydrogen peroxide (e.g., Rescue, Virox Technologies, Inc.).
  - Apply disinfectant liberally and allow to sit for at least 10 minutes before rinsing.
  - If using a household bleach solution (1:10 dilution), make up fresh solution for each use.
- Launder, disinfect, or (if possible) discard items such as bedding, rugs, leashes, toys, and grooming equipment.
  - Hard items should be disinfected as described previously.
  - Washable items should be laundered using the hottest water temperature and longest washing cycle. Do not overload items.
- If steam cleaning carpet and upholstery, use a professional cleaning company to obtain higher temperatures.
- Heating and air conditioning filters should be changed often. Ducts and air vents can be vacuumed or professionally cleaned.

Can I still play with my pet?
Yes—in fact, isolation can be stressful for your pet, so do continue to interact with them during this time and provide them with toys (disposable or washable). Wear protective clothing, such as disposable gowns, and follow up with proper handwashing. Monitor your pet’s appetite and attitude for signs that they are stressed.

For more information, visit cdc.gov/healthypets/diseases/ringworm.html.