

## How to Prevent Common Skin Infections at the Gym

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Health

As more people flock to the gym for their New Year's resolutions, dermatologists from the American Academy of Dermatology are offering words of caution for gym members. While working out has many benefits, including weight control, disease prevention, and even mood improvement, germs can thrive at the gym. This could put gym goers at risk for a variety of common skin infections — unless they take certain precautions.



*“While skin infections are not a reason to cancel your gym membership, it’s important to follow a few simple steps to avoid germs while you’re at the gym,”* says board-certified dermatologist Brian Burke Adams, MD, MPH, FAAD, a professor and chair of dermatology at the University of Cincinnati in Ohio. *“The bacteria, viruses, and fungi that cause skin infections to develop thrive in warm, moist places like sweaty exercise equipment and locker room showers. If you’re not careful, you could end up with an infection like ringworm, plantar warts or impetigo.”*



To help prevent skin infections at the gym, Dr. Adams recommends the following tips:

1. Wear loose-fitting, moisture-wicking clothes. This will help keep your skin dry and prevent germs from growing. Remember to wash your gym clothes after wearing them.
2. Always wear shoes, especially around pools, and in locker rooms and showers. Keep a pair of shower shoes, flip-flops or sandals in your gym bag. Never walk barefoot at a public gym.
3. Keep any cuts clean and covered. Avoid using saunas, steam rooms, and hot tubs until your wound is healed.
4. Disinfect equipment before and after using it. Clean equipment with disinfectant wipes or spray. For additional protection, consider adding a barrier, such as a towel, between your skin and shared surfaces, like workout benches and bicycle seats. When it's possible to provide your own equipment, such as a yoga mat, bring it from home rather than using the gym.
5. Wash or sanitize your hands immediately after working out.
6. Shower as soon as possible. After showering, put on clean clothes, including clean socks and underwear. Never share personal care items, including towels and razors.

*“Without treatment, skin infections can worsen,” Dr. Adams says. “Keep an eye on your skin, and if you notice signs of an infection, such as increased pain or swelling, pus or persistent redness, make an appointment to see a board-certified dermatologist.”*

These tips are demonstrated in “How to Prevent Skin Infections at the Gym,” a video posted to the AAD website and YouTube channel. This video is part of the AAD’s “Video of the Month” series, which offers tips people can use to properly care for their skin, hair, and nails. A new video in the series posts to the AAD website and YouTube channel each month.

#### **About the AAD**

Headquartered in Rosemont, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology, founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 19,000 physicians worldwide, the AAD is

**committed to: advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the AAD at (888) 462-DERM (3376) or [aad.org](http://aad.org). Follow the AAD on Facebook (American Academy of Dermatology), Twitter (@AADskin), Instagram (@AADskin1), or YouTube (AcademyofDermatology).**