

Fact Sheet

Fungal Nail

What is Fungal Nail?

Toenails are subject to the constant presence of bacteria and fungi. Fungal toenails, also known as onychomycosis is one of the most common conditions we see as podiatrists. It is a slow growing fungus that is commonly the same fungus that causes tinea.

Fungal infections usually occur underneath the nail and begin at the end of the nail (where it gets trimmed) and are caused by a spreading of a fungus under the nail plate and into the nail bed. Fungi grow in the warm, moist environment inside socks and shoes. Less often, an infection can appear as a white, powdery discoloration on top of the nail.

Symptoms

- Discoloration beneath the nail, usually brown, white, or yellow
- Thickening of the nail
- An increase in white debris beneath the nail (keratin, a protein that gives form to skin and nails)



Causes

Toenail fungus is often picked up in public gyms, showers, and swimming pools as fungal organisms thrive in these warm, damp environments. Fungal infection can often spread from skin to the nails by:

- Trauma, allowing entry into the nail or nail bed
- Abnormal PH level of the skin
- Not drying off feet thoroughly after exercise or bathing
- Wearing tight enclosed shoes that don't allow feet to breathe
- Diabetics and elderly with compromised immune systems

Treatment

It is recommended you see your podiatrist before the toenail fungus spreads. Treatments include prescribed oral antifungals, topical antifungal lacquers, debridement and laser. Podiatrists have tools to reduce the thickness of the fungal nail so that topical medication can be more easily absorbed, thus providing more comfort to the patient.



ALWAYS CONSULT A TRAINED PROFESSIONAL

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