

Nail Fungus (Onychomycosis)



Fungal infection of the nail, or onychomycosis, is often ignored because the infection can be present for years without causing any pain. The disease is characterized by a progressive change in a toenail's quality and color, which is often ugly and embarrassing.

In reality, the condition is an infection underneath the surface of the nail caused by fungi. When the tiny organisms take hold, the nail often becomes darker in color and foul smelling. Debris may collect beneath the nail plate, white marks frequently appear on the nail plate, and the infection is capable of spreading to other toenails, the skin, or even the fingernails. If ignored, the infection can spread and possibly impair one's ability to work or even walk. This happens because the resulting thicker nails are difficult to trim and make walking painful when wearing shoes. Onychomycosis can also be accompanied by a secondary bacterial or yeast infection in or about the nail plate.

Because it is difficult to avoid contact with microscopic organisms like fungi, the toenails are especially vulnerable around damp areas where people are likely to be walking barefoot, such as swimming pools, locker rooms, and showers, for example. Injury to the nail bed may make it more susceptible to all types of infection, including fungal infection. Those who suffer from chronic diseases, such as diabetes, circulatory problems, or immune-deficiency conditions, are especially prone to fungal nails. Other contributing factors may be a history of athlete's foot and excessive perspiration.

Prevention

- Proper hygiene and regular inspection of the feet and toes are the first lines of defense against fungal nails
- Clean and dry feet resist disease.
- Washing the feet with soap and water, remembering to dry thoroughly, is the best way to prevent an infection.
- Shower shoes should be worn when possible in public areas.
- Shoes, socks, or hosiery should be changed more than once daily.
- Toenails should be clipped straight across so that the nail does not extend beyond the tip of the toe.
- Wear shoes that fit well and are made of materials that breathe.
- Avoid wearing excessively tight hosiery, which promote moisture.
- Socks made of synthetic fiber tend to "wick" away moisture faster than cotton or wool socks.
- Disinfect instruments used to cut nails.
- Disinfect home pedicure tools.
- Don't apply polish to nails suspected of infection—those that are red, discolored, or swollen, for example.

There are essentially 5 treatment options for Fungal Toenails:

1. Topical Antifungals

- Options include Formula 3, Penlac Nail Lacquer, Tea Tree Oil, Vick's VapoRub, etc.
- Necessary to apply once or twice daily for a year
- Has a 25% chance for success

2. Oral Antifungals

- Options include Lamisil (terbinafine) or Sporanox (itraconazole)
- Involves taking one pill per day x 90 days.
- Medication builds up in the nail root as a loading dose for the first 90 days.
- Once the 90 pills are completed, the new nail will grow out with the medication inside
- We need to get bloodwork to make sure your liver is working ok prior to taking.
- Has a 70% success rate

3. Laser Nail Treatment

- Q-Clear Laser System
- Short intense bursts of pulsed energy which targets the fungus under the nail to kill it
- Painless procedure performed in the office.
- After the laser, we have to wait until the new nail grows out clear, which can take a year
- Not covered by Medical Insurance, as they consider it cosmetic
- Has an 70% success rate

4. Permanent Nail Removal

- Toe is anesthetized in the office, the entire nail is removed
- Phenol acid is placed at the nail growth area to cauterize and kill the nail.
- Drains a clear, watery fluid for about a month, so we cover with Neosporin and Bandaid x 1 month
- Nail bed will either heal smooth and almost look like a nail is still present, or a wrinkled skin.
- You can paint over the skin with nail polish once healed.
- Nail will never grow back, but you won't have to look at the thick, ugly nail any longer.
- Painless after healed
- Has a 100% success rate of clearing the fungus, as you won't have a nail anymore.

5. Serial Debridement

- It is almost impossible for the fungus in the nail to spread through your system.
- So you can leave it alone and you will just have thick nails the rest of your life.
- You can try to "debride" (trim) them yourself regularly – like every 2-3 months.
- You can file them from top-to-bottom to try to thin them.
- You can come into our office every 2-3 months for nail debridement's also.
- 0% chance of fungus going away, but we can keep your nails short and thinner