

WELCOME TO RECONSTRUCTIVE FOOT & ANKLE INSTITUTE, LLC
NEWS YOU CAN USE!

What Is Toenail Fungus?

Toenail fungus, or onychomycosis, 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 smells foul. 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 your ability to work or even walk. 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.

Causes

Because it is difficult to avoid contact with microscopic organisms like fungi, the toenails are especially vulnerable around damp areas where you 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.

Symptoms

Toenail fungus 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.

Home Treatment

A daily routine of cleansing over a period of many months may temporarily suppress mild infections. White markings that appear on the surface of the nail can be filed off, followed by the application of an over-the-counter liquid antifungal agent. However, even the best over-the-counter treatments may not prevent a fungal infection from coming back.

When to Visit Dr. Michaels

You should visit Dr. Michaels podiatrist when you notice any discoloration, thickening, or deformity of your toenails. The earlier you seek professional treatment, the greater your chance at getting your nails to clear.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Treatments may vary, depending on the nature and severity of the infection. Dr. Michaels can detect a fungal infection early, culture the nail, determine the cause, and form a suitable treatment plan, which may include prescribing topical or oral medication, and debridement (removal of diseased nail matter and debris) of an infected nail.

Newer oral antifungals, approved by the Food and Drug Administration, may help but are toxic to the liver. The best way to treat this is to have laser treatment to clear the fungus. This treatment is painless and very effective. Shoe sanitizers and topical treatments are also effective. Dr. Michaels may also prescribe a topical treatment, which can be an effective treatment modality for fungal nails.

In some cases, surgical treatment may be required. Temporary removal of the infected nail can be performed to permit direct application of a topical antifungal. Permanent removal of a chronically painful nail that has not responded to any other treatment permits the fungal infection to be cured and prevents the return of a deformed nail.

Trying to solve the infection without the qualified help of Dr. Michaels can lead to more problems. With new technical advances in combination with simple preventive measures, the treatment of this lightly regarded health problem can often be successful.

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.

- ◆ Wash your feet with soap and water, remembering to dry thoroughly.
- ◆ Wear shower shoes when possible in public areas.
- ◆ Change shoes, socks, or hosiery more than once daily.
- ◆ Clip toenails 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 to decrease moisture.
- ◆ Wear socks made of synthetic fiber that wicks`moisture away from your feet faster than cotton or wool socks do.
- ◆ Disinfect instruments used to cut nails.
- ◆ Disinfect home pedicure tools.
- ◆ Don't apply polish to nails suspected of infection (those that are discolored, for example).

To prevent infections from nail salons or spas and to provide Comprehensive Foot & Ankle Care® we are pleased to announce that we have started to perform Foot Facials or medical grade pedicures and manicures in our offices. A one hour Foot Facial is relaxing and safe. We are providing this service to you as a safe alternative to salons that may not sterilize their equipment or use dirty products on your feet. We use organic and/or natural products that clean and moisturize your skin and your nails. A natural nail polish with no harsh chemicals can be used or your nails can be buffed to a shine. You will enjoy a calf massage and scrub in a clean, safe and sterile environment. Nothing that touches you will touch another. Our sterilization process is so thorough that it has been published in scientific journals. We've analyzed every aspect of this process from the metal used in the basin, the ingredients in the products to the shape and texture of the products and instruments used. Bottom line: your feet will look and feel great and I'll make sure you're safe. Please call now to schedule your 1 hour Foot Facial today! A manicure and pedicure are about 1.5 hours and extremely relaxing.

We look forward to solving your foot and ankle problems with Comprehensive Foot and Ankle Care® and treating you like a member of the family.

Very truly yours,

Daniel D. Michaels, DPM, MS & Associates