

Reconstructive Foot & Ankle Institute, LLC

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FUNGAL NAILS (ONYCHOMYCOSIS):

The most common nail disorder is a fungal infection of the nail called onychomycosis. Fungus is everywhere including your shoes and socks. Some people get fungal infections and others don't. This is predetermined by genetics as some people can walk through a puddle of fungus and not get the infection and others can walk around the puddle and become infected.

A fungus is a common mold that thrives in dark, warm, moist areas so inside shoes one would expect to find fungus. On the feet, it can cause athlete's foot (tinea pedis) which can advance to onychomycosis if left untreated. Fungal problems can be a result of environment (socks, shoes, heat, and humidity) or weakened immunity (diseases such as diabetes). Chronic fungal infections are most common in adults, while acute fungal infections are seen more often in children.

When a fungal infection progresses, it may infect one or more nails turning them yellow, green, black or other colors. Fungal nail infections can cause nail thickening, inflammation or sensitivity. The fungus lives under the nail at the root and on the surface in some instances. The diagnosis of onychomycosis can be made with a simple culture of the nail plate.

Treatment consists of doing nothing which will allow the fungus to spread and all the nails will thicken. Doing something is usually the better option.

The toenail can be removed permanently with a small, short in office procedure. The nail will never come back after this and people do well without the toenail; however, some don't like the idea of this.

There is an oral medication that can work about 19% of the time but it does have liver toxicity as a side effect which necessitates blood testing prior to and after the first week of taking the medication. Pulsing the dose of the medication by taking it 1 week a month for 4-8 months makes it safer than if you take it for 3 months straight.

There is a nail polish that is a prescription that you apply every day and take off once a week. You do this for a year and it works about 6% of the time.

Finally, our protocol is FDA cleared, 90% effective, painless and safe but not covered by insurance. We use a laser on the nail once a month for 3 months which kills the fungus but not your skin cells. Using our ultraviolet light appliance daily to sterilize your shoes without chemicals prevents fungus from the shoe getting on your feet. Utilizing our nail support vitamin helps your nails grow out faster which eliminates fungus from them more expeditiously. Daily application of our antifungal foot cream after showering is also necessary to prevent tinea pedis which is the precursor to fungal nails. The final step of our protocol is to use two topical antifungal nail polishes in the morning and evening. Each nail polish has different antifungal medications so they kill the fungus in different ways which is more effective than just one medication. We don't recommend colored nail polish during this time but if it is utilized then apply our safe chemical free nail polishes for that special occasion then remove the nail polish after your event is over. If you want to have a clear coat on your toenails then we have a buffer system that gives your nails this appearance instead of using a clear nail polish.