



# WHY FUNGAL NAILS ARE SO HARD TO TREAT... AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

Bellevue Podiatry



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# What is a fungal toenail infection and how do I know if I have one?

Fungal toenail infections (known as Onychomycosis in the Podiatry world) are caused by the same fungus that gives you tinea (otherwise known as Athlete's foot). These infections occur under the toenail and typically cause the toenail to be discoloured either yellow or brown, and make the toenail crumbly and thick.

Most cases of fungal toenail can be easily confirmed by a visual inspection of the toenail, however, in some instances, you will require a toenail scraping to be taken and sent off to a laboratory for confirmation. The reason being is that some suspected fungal infections can actually just be a discoloured and thickened toenail – this may be caused by a recent trauma to the toenail, or you may just have naturally discoloured toenails.

As not all toenails that look like they may have a fungal infection are actually fungal infections, you should contact us and book in for a professional opinion if you have any doubt.



# Why are fungal toenails so hard to treat?



Podiatrists around the world can agree that effectively treating [fungal nail infections](#) is not always an easy task. Most over the counter treatments have a low success rate, especially for serious cases of fungal toenail infection, and the probability of the nail fungus returning is quite high.

When treated with direct contact, most nail fungus can be successfully cured with an over the counter fungicide, similar to what you would use to treat a case of athlete's foot. Most people would agree that treating athlete's foot isn't difficult, so why does nail fungus, a similar fungus to athlete's foot, create so many issues for successful treatment?

The difficulty in effective treatment is due to the nail itself and where the nail fungus infection is located – being able to get under the protective nail to treat the fungus is no easy task. Our toenails are there to act as a structural support for our toes and provide more grip. They are designed to be strong and durable, but this, unfortunately, means our toenails provide a safe and protected environment for the nail fungus infection to thrive.

Adding insult to injury, our toenails are made out of keratin, which is exactly what the nail fungus loves to feed on! It's no wonder fungal toenail infections are not so easy to effectively treat. It is estimated up to 12% of the population are affected by toenail fungus, so no-one should feel alone if you think you may have a fungal toenail infection, you are in good company with millions of other people from all over the world, and from all different walks of life.

# How to avoid getting a fungal nail infection and how to stop it from getting worse if I have one

Obviously, prevention is better than cure when it comes to fungal toenail infections. There are certain actions you can take to greatly reduce your chances of getting a fungal toenail infection and inhibit its spread to other toenails or family members.

The most important thing to do is manage your foot hygiene closely and make sure you are not creating an environment where a fungal toenail infection would thrive. This means you must let your feet dry out completely after extended periods of being inside your shoes, especially after intense exercise sessions where your feet sweat a lot – fungal infections love this kind of environment to get a foot in the door (pardon the pun), so take every opportunity you can to thoroughly dry out your feet.

It is a smart move to buy yourself a bottle of Canesten anti-fungal detergent and wash all your socks with it on a regular basis – if you think you may already have a fungal toenail infection, this is a must do. Also, while you are buying your bottle of Canesten, you should buy a can of disinfectant spray such as Glen 20 and regularly spray your shoes (again, if you suspect you may have a fungal toenail infection already, this is a must do activity to prevent further spreading of the infection while you seek professional guidance).

If you do currently suspect you may have a fungal toenail infection, you should throw out your nail clippers and buy a new pair. Make sure you cut the healthy nails first, then the toenail with the infection – and thoroughly clean the nail clippers after each use with a disinfectant spray. And importantly, do not let anyone else use your nail clippers.



Another thing to be aware of if you have a fungal toenail infection is tinea - or Athlete's foot. As we mentioned earlier, tinea and fungal toenail infections are caused by the same type of fungus, so if you have tinea, you need to make sure you treat this as well as it can get under your toenail and give you a nasty fungal toenail infection.

Fortunately, as tinea is located on the surface of the skin (and not hidden under the toenail), so there is a wide range of effective over the counter sprays and creams you can buy to quickly nip it in the bud – so if you have tinea, get it sorted immediately before it can get under your toenails and create a more serious issue for you.

If you happen to get regular pedicures, ensure the Beauty Salon sterilises their instruments or only use them once and then throw them out – you would be shocked to know how few beauty salons sterilise their instruments. Not sterilising the pedicure instruments allows the fungal toenail infection to be transferred to anyone else that receives a pedicure with the same instruments that were used with someone who had a fungal toenail infection.



# What treatment options are out there and how good are they?

With so many people being affected by fungal toenail infections, coupled with how difficult it can be to treat, there are a number of treatment options that have been developed to treat fungal toenail infections with varying levels of success depending on the severity of the infection.

01

## Topical nail paints

Usually require daily application until the nail grows out – It can be difficult to reach the toenail fungus infection in serious cases with topical paints.

02

## Oral anti-fungal medication

Are not suitable for everyone and should be discussed with your local doctor as it can have harmful effects if not used in the right circumstances.

03

## Laser therapy

Is typically recommended for serious cases of toenail fungus infection and usually requires multiple sessions as part of the treatment plan. Laser therapy can add up to be an expensive exercise.

04

## Surgical removal of the affected toenail

Under a local anesthetic and then treating any fungus left behind is considered in extreme cases. Before undertaking this procedure you should seek a second opinion from your local health practitioner.

05

## Clearanail

A state-of-the-art micro-drill that safely and painlessly creates almost-invisible holes in the nail plate to allow a safe anti-fungal agent to reach the fungus under the nail and kill it. We have had great success in our clinic using this effective and painless method to kill toenail fungus.

# Gap Free Fungal Toenail Assessment & Treatment Plan

As you can see there are a number of potential remedies for toenail fungus infections out there, so it is important that you speak to an experienced Podiatrist about which treatment will work best for your situation – and the sooner the better. The longer you leave a fungal toenail infection, the more difficult it will be to get rid of.

If you think you may have a fungal toenail infection and want the right professional advice on how to treat it, book in a gap free fungal nail assessment and treatment plan. Gap Free assessments are limited to 3 per week (and for those that don't have Extras Cover, we offer a 50% discount on your consult).

Go to: <https://bit.ly/2Huitlf> to book online or call (03) 9457 2336 and make your appointment to see one of our friendly and experienced Podiatrists.







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