



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?

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.