



Understanding and Treating Toenail Fungus:

A Comprehensive Guide



— NORTHEAST —
Foot and Ankle

INTRODUCTION

Toenail fungus, medically known as onychomycosis, is a common condition affecting millions worldwide. This ebook aims to provide a comprehensive overview of toenail fungus, including its causes, symptoms, at-home treatments, and professional interventions.

PLUS: Learn how we've successfully treated toenail fungus at Northeast Foot and Ankle.

Northeast Foot and Ankle

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WHAT IS TOENAIL FUNGUS?

Toenail fungus is a fungal infection that occurs when microscopic fungi enter the toenail and nail bed, causing an overgrowth. The most common culprits are dermatophytes, but yeasts and molds can also contribute. The infection may lead to discoloration, thickening, and crumbling of the toenail.

If left untreated, it can spread to other nails and the surrounding skin, increasing the risk of more extensive fungal infections. Individuals with weakened immune systems, diabetes, or poor circulation are more susceptible to severe complications from toenail fungus. It is essential to address the infection promptly to prevent further progression and alleviate symptoms.

Toenail fungus should be treated.



TOENAIL FUNGUS: CAUSES & RISKS

Understanding the causes and risk factors of toenail fungus is crucial for prevention. Warm and humid environments, poor hygiene, compromised immune systems, and certain medical conditions contribute to developing toenail fungus. Identifying and addressing these risk factors can help reduce the likelihood of infection.

Here are some causes and risk factors of toenail fungus:

- **Warm and Humid Environments:** Fungi thrive in warm and moist conditions, making communal showers, swimming pools, and sweaty shoes prime breeding grounds.
- **Poor Hygiene:** Inadequate foot hygiene, such as not regularly cleaning and drying the feet, can create an environment conducive to fungal growth.
- **Compromised Immune Systems:** Conditions or medications that weaken the immune system can reduce the body's ability to fend off fungal infections, increasing the risk of toenail fungus.
- **Certain Medical Conditions:** Conditions like diabetes, which affects circulation, and psoriasis, which can damage nails, may make individuals more susceptible to toenail fungus.
- **Previous Nail Injuries:** Trauma to the toenail, whether from sports, accidents, or ill-fitting shoes, can create openings for fungi to enter and cause infection.
- **Age:** As we age, our nails can become more brittle and develop tiny cracks, providing an entry point for fungi.
- **Wearing Tight or Non-Breathable Shoes:** Shoes that don't allow proper ventilation create an environment where moisture is trapped, fostering fungal growth.
- **Sharing Personal Items:** Sharing nail clippers, files, or shoes with someone with a fungal infection increases the risk of spreading the fungi.

Awareness of these factors and preventive measures can significantly reduce the likelihood of developing toenail fungus.

RECOGNIZING SYMPTOMS

Early detection of toenail fungus is essential for effective treatment. Learn to recognize the symptoms, including yellowing or darkening of the nail, thickening, distorted shape, and a foul odor. Timely intervention can prevent the spread of the infection to other nails.

Here are some of the symptoms to recognize:

- **Discoloration:** Toenails may turn yellow, brown, or white, indicating a fungal infection.
- **Thickening:** The affected toenail often becomes thicker than usual, changing its normal texture.
- **Crumbling or Brittle Nails:** Fungal infections can cause toenails to become brittle, crumbly, or prone to breaking.
- **Distorted Shape:** The shape of the toenail may alter, with irregularities such as curves or indentations.
- **Separation from Nail Bed:** The toenail may lift or separate from the nail bed, creating a gap.
- **Changes in Nail Texture:** The nail's surface may become rough or develop pits and ridges.
- **Foul Odor:** A noticeable and unpleasant smell may emanate from the infected toenail.
- **Pain or Discomfort:** Some individuals may experience pain or discomfort, mainly when pressure is applied to the affected toenail.
- **Difficulty in Trimming:** Trimming or cutting the toenail may become challenging due to its altered texture.
- **Spread to Other Nails:** Toenail fungus can spread to adjacent toenails or even fingernails if left untreated.



AT HOME TREATMENTS

There are various at-home remedies that individuals can try to manage toenail fungus. Let's explore natural and over-the-counter treatments.

- **Topical Antifungal Medications:**

- Over-the-counter creams and ointments containing antifungal agents. Applied directly to the affected toenail and surrounding skin.

- **Antifungal Nail Lacquer:**

- Prescription-strength nail polish containing antifungal medication. This is applied like regular nail polish, usually every week.

- **Home Remedies:**

- Soak feet in a mixture of vinegar and water.
- Apply tea tree oil or coconut oil. These are known for their antifungal properties.



LIFESTYLE AND PREVENTION

Adopting healthy habits and maintaining proper foot hygiene helps prevent toenail fungus. To reduce the risk of infection, we recommend keeping feet dry, wearing breathable footwear, using antifungal powders, and practicing good nail care.

Here are simple lifestyle changes for prevention:

- **Improve Foot Hygiene:**

- Keep the feet clean and dry.
- Regularly trim and clean your toenails.

- **Avoid Tight or Non-Breathable Footwear:**

- Opt for shoes that allow proper ventilation—nothing too tight or restricting.

- **Address Underlying Health Conditions:**

- Manage conditions like diabetes that can contribute to fungal infections.

PROFESSIONAL TREATMENTS

Professional intervention may be necessary for severe or persistent cases of toenail fungus. Here, we discuss common medical treatments, including oral antifungal medications, topical prescription medications, and laser therapy.

- **Prescription Oral Antifungal Medications:**

- A healthcare professional may prescribe stronger medications that can be taken orally to address the infection from within the body.

- **Laser Therapy:**

- A leading way to treat foot fungus effectively over time through multiple sessions.
- We offer Lunula Laser therapy and are seeing great success with this non-invasive treatment! More information is available on the following page. You can also visit our website or call our office to learn more.

- **Surgical Nail Removal:**

- In severe cases, the infected toenail may be surgically removed, which allows for direct treatment of the nail bed.

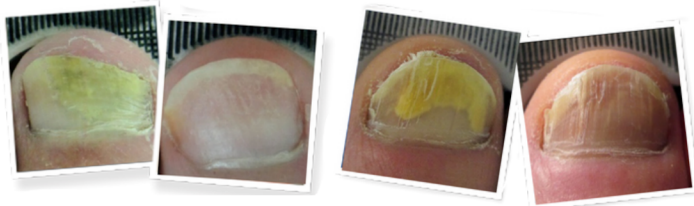
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Sincerely,
The Doctors and Staff at Northeast Foot
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