



11 December 2020

Fungal Toenail Infection

What is fungal nail infection?

Fungal nail infection (onychomycosis) is the most common infection of the nails. It usually affects toenails more often than fingernails. Toenail fungal nail infections occur when fungi attack the toenails from an external source such as from walking barefoot in damp communal areas such as a public swimming pool. It can also occur from fungi that live harmlessly on surrounding skin such as the toe webs or soles of the feet, which can occasionally multiply and lead to infections. As fungi thrive in a warm and moist environment, this condition is more common in people who wear tight closed-toe shoes over long periods of time.

Symptoms



You may have nail fungus if one or more of your nails are:

- Thickened
- Whitish to yellow-brown discoloration
- Brittle or crumbly
- Distorted in shape
- Darkened in color, caused by debris building up under the nail
- Foul-smelling



If left untreated, the entire nail may fall off.

Risk Factors

Factors that increase the chances for fungal toenail infections include:

- Damage to the nail.
- Poor foot hygiene.
- Low immune system associated with chronic diseases such as diabetes and certain immune disorders.
- Conditions that reduce blood flow to the toes (poor blood circulation). eg. diabetes
- Wearing closed-toe shoes for long hours.
This creates an optimal environment for fungal growth, especially in the tropical Singapore climate.

Diagnosis

The visual appearance, such as distortion and discolouration of the toenail, can be a good indicator, especially in moderate to advanced infection. However, some conditions, such as psoriasis, and nail bacterial infections can mimic a fungal infection of the nail. To confirm the presence and type of nail fungus, nail clippings are sent to the lab for microscopy and culture.

Treatment

Your doctor may prescribe antifungal drugs that you take orally or apply to the nail. In some situations, it is helpful to combine oral and topical antifungal therapies.

1. Medicated nail paint

In mild cases, the condition can be treated with a product containing anti-fungal compounds, such as Loceryl, which can be purchased off the counter at the pharmacy.

2. Oral antifungal medication

This clears the infection faster than topical medication. Treatment may last from two to twelve months depending on the type of infection and the oral antifungal tablets prescribed. However, the nail may take as long as a few months to return to near normal appearance even after the treatment has come to an end.

3. Surgery

Some fungal nail infections do not respond to medicines. Your doctor might suggest permanent nail removal if the infection is resistant to treatment, is painful, or if the affected nails are badly deformed and shaky.

Prevention

The best ways to prevent fungal nail infection are to:

- Exercise good feet hygiene.
- Keep nails trimmed.
- Change your socks daily.
- Wear shoes that fit properly to prevent nail damage.
- Air your feet after a long day in closed-toe shoes.
- Rotate your footwear by alternating between at least two different pairs of shoes.
- See your podiatrist or dermatologist early if you suspect that you may have a fungal toenail infection.
- Wear footwear such as sandals or flip-flops in public showers or pools.
- Discard old socks and shoes worn during the fungal infection can help reduce the high risk of reoccurrence.

Medical Services for COVID-19

The outbreak of COVID-19 has caused much disruption in our daily life and business operations. As Singaporeans, we all have a role to play in the fight to prevent spread of COVID-19 and to protect our families, loved ones and colleagues. To help meet the challenge posed by the current COVID-19 outbreak, Raffles is happy to provide the following services to meet your healthcare needs.



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Your foreign domestic worker is required to screen for pregnancy and infectious diseases every six months. Enjoy the convenience of a mobile screening, where we arrange for our medical personnel to go to your home to conduct the tests required.



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Getting Your Vaccination Done At Home

Influenza is a viral infection that causes high fever, muscle aches, runny nose, sore throat and cough. When an infected person coughs or sneezes, anyone who is in close proximity may breathe in the droplets and get infected.

A vaccination to protect you and your family from influenza can be done without going to the clinic. [Find out more](#)