

## How Can I Prevent and Treat Toenail Fungus?

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### What is a toenail fungus infection?

- Toenail fungus (Onychomycosis) is a fungal infection of the toenails.
- The fungus usually invades the edge of the nail and spreads towards the base of the nail.
- It is an infection that can continue to spread to others.
- It requires treatment and will not go away on its own.

### What are the causes of toenail fungus?

- Toenail fungus likes warmth and moisture. Wearing sweaty socks and shoes, using public areas like gyms, swimming pools and, shower rooms can increase your chances of infection.
- There are also risk factors that make a person more likely to get infected such as having:
  - Poor blood circulation due to poorly managed diabetes.
  - A previous or existing injury or infection of the nail.
  - A weakened immune system.
  - Using nail tools used on other people.
  - Wearing closed-in-footwear that is not breathable.
  - A family member who may have passed it to another person.

### How do I know if I have toenail fungus?

You may be able to tell if you have toenail fungus with a few simple questions:

- Do your nails look brittle?
- Has the nail shape changed?
- Are the nail edges crumbling?
- Is there debris trapped under the nail?
- Does the nail seem to be loose or lifting?

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- Is the nail thicker than before?
- Do you notice white or yellow streaks?
- Are your nails dull and lacking shine?



If you answered “yes” to any of the above and the changes have last longer than two weeks, discuss further with your health care provider to arrange for an assessment.

### **How can I prevent getting a toenail fungus infection?**

Here are some tips that may help to prevent getting a toenail infection:

- Keep feet clean and dry.
- Avoid nail polish and acrylic nails that prevent air from reaching the nail surface.
- Avoid walking barefoot in public showers, pools or locker rooms.
- Change your shoes and socks frequently.
- Keep your toenails clipped short and straight across.
- Wear well-fitting socks and shoes made of breathable materials (allows air to pass easily).
- Disinfect nail clippers and other nail care tools.

### **What are my options for treatment if I have toenail fungus?**

- After your health care provider has assessed your toenails, they will decide on which toenail fungus infection treatment is the best approach.
- Usually, a combination of treatments is required to increase your chances of a cure and reduce your chances of it reoccurring:
  1. Topical Medication (a solution is applied directly to the toenail).
  2. Oral Medication (a pill is taken by mouth and is carried to the nail bed by the blood).
  3. Photodynamic therapy (using specialized drugs with light) or other physical treatments.

Content adapted from the Canadian Skin Patient Alliance, Toenail Fungus Information Program

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