

Fungal nail infection



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Fungal nail infections are common.

They're not serious but they can take a long time to treat. Fungal nail infections usually affect your toenails but you can get them on your fingernails too. Fungal nail infections usually start at the edge of the nail. They often then spread to the middle. The nail becomes discoloured and lifts off. The nail becomes brittle and pieces can break off. It can cause pain and swelling in the skin around the nail. A pharmacist can help with fungal nail infections. Speak to a pharmacist if the look of your nail bothers you or it's painful. They may suggest:

- antifungal nail cream – it can take up to 12 months to cure the infection and doesn't always work
- nail-softening cream – used for 2 weeks to soften the nail so the infection can be scraped off

The infection is cured when you see healthy nail growing back at the base. See a GP if your fungal nail infection:

- is severe and treatment hasn't worked
- has spread to other nails

Treatment from a GP

Your GP can prescribe antifungal tablets. You'll need to take these every day for up to 6 months. Tablets can have side effects including:

- headaches
- itching
- loss of taste
- diarrhoea

You can't take antifungal tablets if you're pregnant or have certain conditions. They can damage your liver.

Badly infected nails sometimes need to be removed. It's a small procedure done while the area is numbed (under local anaesthetic).

Other treatment

Laser treatment uses laser to destroy the fungus. You'll have to pay for it as it's not covered by the NHS. It can be expensive. There's little evidence to show it's a long-term cure as most studies only follow patients for 3 months.

Preventing fungal nail infections

Fungal nail infections develop when your feet are constantly warm and damp. You're more likely to get an infection if you wear trainers for a long time and have hot, sweaty feet.



Do

- treat athlete's foot as soon as possible to avoid it spreading to nails
- keep your feet clean and dry
- wear clean socks every day
- wear flip flops in showers at the gym or pool
- throw out old shoes

Don't

- do not wear shoes that make your feet hot and sweaty
- do not share towels
- do not wear other people's shoes
- do not share nail clippers or scissors

Contact us [if not included elsewhere]

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