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FUNGAL INFECTIONS AND THE FEET

The feet are common areas for fungal infections. That is because fungus likes it where it is warm, moist, and dark. That's why feet are more often affected by fungus than hands.

The feet can have fungal infections of the skin or of the toenails. Skin fungal infections are called athlete's foot. Athlete's foot may occur between the toes or anywhere on the feet. These fungal infections usually respond to topical antifungal creams applied twice a day for two weeks.

Fungal infections of the toenails are called onychomycosis (pronounced on a co my co sis). When a fungus infects the toenail, it causes the nail to become thickened and discolored. Often the nail will be crumbly and difficult to trim.

Fungal toenails can cause pain due to their thickness and they can cause embarrassment due to their appearance. The type of fungi that causes Athlete's foot are the same fungi that cause fungal toenails.

Treatment of fungal toenails consists of regular trimming, topical medications, removal of the toenail, oral medication and laser treatment. Each of these treatments have their place. Topical medications can help, but they may not help either. Medication has to be applied daily for over 6 months. Oral medication can be effective. Lamisil is an example of an oral medication. It must be taken for 3 months. The newest treatment employs using a laser.

PREVENTION OF TOENAIL FUNGUS

- Keep the toenails clean and short.
- Avoid going barefoot in public places, especially gyms and locker rooms.
- Never wear someone else's shoes.
- Do not use nail clippers unless they have been cleaned thoroughly.
- Use an antifungal powder or spray in the shoes once a week.
- Older tennis shoes and other well-worn foot wear should be discarded, as they can be heavily contaminated with fungal spores.

- Wear shoes made of leather or other materials that allow the feet to breathe.
- Wear socks made of acrylic or wool, as opposed to cotton which holds moisture against the skin.

Prevent athlete's foot, which may spread infection to the nail bed.



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