

A Guide for Patients and Families

Care of Fungal Nails



What is Fungal Nail Infection?



Fungal infection of the nail is more common in people with diabetes. It can present in toenails and fingernails, affecting more than one nail.

Fungal infection can start at one part of the nail. It often spreads and infects other parts of the nails, making the nail discoloured (white, yellow, green or black).

The infected nail may become brittle and sometimes thickened. At times, pieces of the nail may break off or the whole nail lifts off. This may cause pain and swelling in the skin around the nail.

It also increases the risk of fungal infection to the surrounding skin, which can lead to secondary bacterial infection.

What increases the chances of getting fungal nail infection?



Fungus like to grow in warm and moist environment. This can affect people who perspire a lot or use damp socks



Having fungal skin infection increases the risk of getting fungal nail infection



Trauma to toe nails or coming into contact with someone who has fungal toenail and / or skin infection through the sharing of communal shower or during footwear fitting



Medical conditions or medications that affect the skin or weaken the immune system including poorly controlled diabetes



Other factors such as smoking and advanced age

How can I reduce the chance of getting Fungal Nail Infection?

What can I do?



File your nail regularly to maintain the nail length and reduce the thickness



Wear clean and dry socks daily



Wear properly fitted shoes that have deep and broad toe box



Apply antifungal medication (cream or nail lacquer) as prescribed



Your doctor may send off nail clippings for further testing. Sometimes, oral antifungal tablets are given.



Keep feet clean and dry, especially the space between your toes



Choose footwear made of breathable materials



Have your diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol under control

What should I avoid doing?



Do not share towels



Do not wear other people's shoes and socks, use a pair of socks when fitting for shoes



Do not share nail clippers or nail file



Avoid walking barefooted at damp public places such as swimming pools, gyms and shower rooms

When should I seek medical treatment?

▶ If the fungal nail infection causes pain or shows signs of infection such as redness, warmth, swelling or pus discharge, you should seek medical attention immediately.



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