

STEINBERG PODIATRY ASSOCIATES, P.A.

FUNGAL NAILS

What are Fungal Toe Nails?

Fungal toe nails are quite common in Florida due in part to the humidity. Fungi thrive in a moist environment. Various types of fungi are present everywhere in the environment, but the dark moist surroundings created by shoes and nylon stockings make the feet a prime target. Fungal toe nails are not usually dangerous, however they can turn the nails yellow, chalky white, or brown, and often cause thickening of the nail or other abnormal growth patterns. As the fungus grows it creates a build up of moist debris. Pressure from a thickened nail or the build up of fungal debris may cause painful ingrown toenails.

Treatment

There are many ways to treat fungal nails. The most common is routine debridement of the nails and application of a topical anti-fungal preparation. This may not fully restore the appearance of a normal nail, however it usually prevents it from getting any worse.

Debridement of nails includes trimming the nails to prevent ingrown nails and reducing the thickness of the nails to prevent shoe pressure. Inspection of the toes for minor cuts and or nail separation from the underlying skin is important. Secondary bacterial infections may be associated with this and can penetrate the skin. Filing the nail aids the topical anti-fungal in penetrating the nail. An over the counter anti-fungal such as: Fungoid Tincture”, “Lotrimin Solution” or “Lamisil Pump/Spray Solution” may be used alone or with a prescription medicine added to it. In order to be effective it must be used every day. Oral medication is available by prescription for the treatment of fungal toe nails resistant to other forms of treatment. Even after treatment it is important that you continue to use topical anti-fungal medication or isopropyl rubbing alcohol on your nails after showering to prevent recurrence.

Things you can do to make your treatment more successful and avoid recurrence:

- 1) Wash feet thoroughly each day with soap and water especially between toes.
- 2) Dry your feet well after showering.
- 3) Wear cotton socks - avoid nylon.
- 4) Use anti-fungal powder in your shoes if excessive sweating is a problem.
- 5) Replace older shoes, “Lysol” others.
- 6) Clean showers/bath with “bleach” and make sure drain is working properly.
- 7) Use a topical antifungal medication on the nails. Liquid solutions are usually best.