

## Fungal Infections



### Fungal Infections explained

Fungal infections of the foot are caused by a group of fungal micro-organisms called dermatophytes.

Dermatophytes can affect the foot in many ways however, the most common conditions seen are athlete's foot also known as Tinea Pedis and Onychomycosis which is a fungal infection of the toenail.

Fungal micro-organisms survive in dark, warm and moist environments. As our feet spend a lot of time in our shoes and socks they can easily survive on your feet. If you have sweaty feet you are more prone to getting a fungal infection.

Fungal micro-organisms can be caught from:

- Locker rooms
- Swimming pools
- Showers
- From having a pedicure with un-sterilized instruments

People who suffer from diabetes, heart problems or immunological deficiencies such as HIV are more likely to attract fungal micro-organisms.

### Tinea Pedis (Athletes foot)

Tinea pedis is a very common condition caused by a fungal infection. It is characterised by:

- A collection of red blisters
- Dryness and cracking of the skin
- Thickening of the skin
- Itchiness and soreness

Tinea pedis can occur on the sole of the foot or in between the toes. There are 2 types of tinea pedis that can affect the foot, they are:

### The Dry type

Common in the arch of the foot and in between the toes, characterised by dry scaly patches, can be red and inflamed and commonly itchy.

### The Wet type

Can occur on the sole of the foot but is common between the toes and presents as patches of blisters that are full of fluid, red and inflamed, the patches can open and become sore, the skin can appear soggy and the open sore in between the toes can bleed. This type is extremely itchy.

This condition is easily recognised by a podiatrist who will advise you as to the best treatment options available. Tinea pedis can be well treated with anti-fungal medicines over the counter from local pharmacies or from your podiatrist. If these treatments are unsuccessful the podiatrist may take scrapings of your skin and send a sample off to a laboratory for inspection to determine the type of fungal micro-organism causing the infection.



## Onychomycosis

Is another fungal infection which affects the toe nails. Onychomycosis is again caused by dermatophytes that infect the nail plate. Some fungal nails can be caused from a previous tinea pedis infection of the foot. Fungal micro-organisms enter the nail plate multiplying and causing the nail to change in many ways including the shape.

A fungal nail is characterised by:

- Colour changes
- Debris underneath the nail
- Odour
- Thickening or sometimes thinning of the nail

Fungal nails can cause pain due to pressure from the shoes.

Fungal nails have little to do with personal cleanliness. Wearing tight fitting shoes is enough to weaken the nails as a consequence this exposes the underlying nail bed to infection.

Fungal nails are treated again using anti-fungal medicines from local pharmacies and also from your podiatrist, which can be painted onto the nail. The treatment will be more effective if the thickness of the nail is reduced by a podiatrist. By reducing the thickness of the nail the fungus is easily exposed which gives a greater treatment success.

Fungal nails can take a long time to resolve, consistent treatment is the key to successfully treating fungal nails.



## Any further questions?

Please feel free to call us .....

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