



FUNGAL INFECTIONS

Fungal infections can occur on the skin of the foot (athlete's foot or tinea pedis) or on the toenails (onychomycosis).

TINEA PEDIS (fungal infection of the skin of the foot, athlete's foot) often occurs between the toes but can also be on the bottom surface of the foot). Fungus grows in areas that are warm, dark, and moist. If your

feet sweat a lot you may be prone to tinea pedis. There are other skin conditions which mimic tinea pedis including psoriasis, eczema, and allergic dermatitis.

Tinea pedis in between the toes can cause itching or burning, inflammation, and excess moisture between the toes. Sometimes there are cracks in the skin between the toes as well. Tinea pedis on the bottom of the foot can vary from scaling and dryness to inflammation and a rash with small or large blisters that can sometimes be very painful.

Tinea pedis can lead to more severe infections of the foot if there are any cracks or breaks in the skin. More serious bacterial infections can get into the deeper tissues of your foot through these breaks, necessitating the use of oral antibiotics for treatment.

Many patients begin using over-the-counter anti-fungal agents with varied success. Any infection that does not respond to those remedies in 2 weeks or is causing pain, redness, or swelling should be seen by a podiatrist. Treatment is usually with topical fungistatic or fungicidal medication. In more severe cases an oral medication may be prescribed.

ONYCHOMYCOSIS is an infection under the toenail caused by fungi. The nails may be discolored, thickened, painful, and lifted with a build up of dead tissue under the nail. It can be present for years, progressing very gradually. It sometimes results after a minor or severe trauma to the toenail, after an unsanitary pedicure, or may spread from a fungal infection of the skin. Tinea pedis and onychomycosis are often seen together and one infection may cause the other.

Some changes in appearance of the toenail can be due to more serious conditions of the nail or nail bed such as melanoma. Because of this; any discolorations or changes in the nail should be checked by your podiatrist or other doctor.

Onychomycosis may be difficult to treat depending on the severity and your overall health. Treatment by your doctor may vary from trimming and filing of the painful nail to topical or oral medications. Painful onychomycosis can cause ingrown toenails and may need a minor surgical procedure to relieve the pain.

It is not easy to prevent tinea pedis and onychomycosis, however, the following precautions can be taken: Do not walk around barefoot and use shower shoes in public showers or areas. If your feet sweat excessively use moisture wicking socks and talcum powder. Change socks frequently if they get wet and do not wear wet shoes. Dry between the toes thoroughly. Trim nails straight across and do not let them extend beyond the tips of the toes. Be sure the shoes fit properly and there is no rubbing of the toenails on the top or ends of the shoes.

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