

Toenail Fungus: Care Instructions

Overview

A nail that is infected by a fungus usually turns white or yellow. As the fungus spreads, the nail turns a darker color and gets thicker. And the nail edges start to turn ragged and crumble. A bad infection can cause pain, and the nail may pull away from the toe or finger.

Nails that are exposed to moisture and warmth a lot are more likely to get infected by a fungus. This can happen from wearing sweaty shoes often and from walking barefoot on shower floors. Or it can happen if you share personal things, such as towels and nail clippers.

It's hard to treat nail fungus. And the infection can return after it has cleared up. But medicines can sometimes get rid of nail fungus for good. If the infection is very bad, or if it causes a lot of pain, you may need to have the nail removed.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you have any problems with your medicine.
- If your doctor gave you a cream or liquid to put on your nail, use it exactly as directed.
- Wash your hands and feet often, and wash your hands after touching your feet.
- Keep your nails clean and dry. Dry your feet completely after you bathe and before you put on shoes and socks.
- Keep your nails trimmed.
- Change socks often. Wear dry socks that absorb moisture.
- Don't go barefoot in public places.
- Use a spray or powder that fights fungus on your feet and in your shoes.
- Don't pick at the skin around your nails.
- Don't use nail polish or fake nails on your nails.
- Don't share personal things, such as towels and nail clippers.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs of infection, such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
 - Red streaks leading from the site.
 - Pus draining from the site.
 - A fever.
- You have new or increased toe pain.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.

liability for your use of this information.