

How do I prevent spreading the infection?

- Carry out all of the advice above
- Do not share other people's towels or socks or shoes
- Do not pull or pick at the nails or skin
- Have your infection treated promptly by seeking expert advice early on from a health professional such as your GP or a Podiatrist

If you have any questions regarding the information in this leaflet, please contact Podiatry Services

Further information about the service and how to manage a range of foot health problems yourself, can also be found on our website:

www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk/project/podiatry

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Podiatry Services Patient Information Leaflet



Fungal Foot Infections Affecting Toenails & Skin

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(Athlete's Foot)

What are Fungal Infections?

Fungal infections are very common infections that can affect both skin and nails. They are caused by fungi and yeasts and can affect people of all ages.

On the feet when fungal infections affect the skin, it is often called Athlete's Foot. When affecting the nails they are often called fungal nail infections. Treatments are available, however infections of the nails can be difficult to treat and treatment can take several months.

What are the signs to look for on the skin?

- White, rubbery skin between the toes which itches, especially between the little toes
- Red, raw looking skin which again, is often itchy
- Redness and dry scaly skin that flakes, peels or cracks over the soles & edges of the feet, often with white lines in the skin creases
- Sore, pus-filled, weeping rash or small spot-like blisters in a rash on one or both feet

What are the signs to look for on toenails?

Toenails vary in appearance and may have:

- White patches on the nail's surface or yellow/brown discolouration beneath or within the nail
- Sometimes the nails are thickened
- Nails may be 'brittle' or crumble
- May have a 'cheesy' odour

Treatment

You should seek a professional opinion to ensure the correct diagnosis. Often a sample of skin or piece of nail will need to be sent to a laboratory for testing to confirm a diagnosis.

For skin

There are many effective treatments available that you can buy over the counter at a Pharmacy and in supermarkets. It is important to speak to the Pharmacist or a Podiatrist who can give advice on the right option for you.

For nails

You should seek professional advice from a Podiatrist or your Doctor. There are several options including tablets on prescription and special nail paints and lacquers. Surgical removal of the nail may also be an option with severe infections and is a very quick and easy procedure to undergo.

How do avoid getting fungal infections?

Fungi and yeasts thrive in dark, damp and warm environments. This type of environment is typical inside shoes and moist socks. Feet that are shut away in shoes all day make an ideal habitat for the infection to grow once it has been introduced.

Follow these tips to help avoid infection:

- Wash your feet daily to get rid of germs, and dry them well, especially in between the toes
- If there are facilities, wash your feet after sport if they have got 'hot' and 'sweaty'
- Change your tights or socks daily, and a change after sports is helpful too
- Wear socks made from 60 – 80% natural materials such as cotton, wool or bamboo
- Avoid footwear made from synthetic materials as this can trap moisture
- Change your trainers after sports to allow the shoes and your feet to 'cool down'
- Rotate your footwear to let them "dry out" and put them out in the fresh air to dry
- Do not use talc or foot powders – these can become trapped between toes, get damp and hold moisture against your skin
- Use medicated or antifungal powders, creams or sprays only when you have an active infection. Constant use can reduce their effectiveness in treating an infection when you need them.
- Avoid the constant use of nail varnishes