

Fungal Infections

Podiatry Service



Your local
healthcare
provider

Fungal skin infections

Tinea Pedis, or Athletes foot, is a common condition that affects the skin on the feet often between the toes, soles and sides of the foot.

It is caused by fungal spores growing on the skin. These spores thrive in warm moist environments. It often presents as itchy red areas on the foot that can be slightly moist (especially between the toes).

Treatment

Fungal skin infections are often self limiting and will settle down with good foot hygiene. Wash and dry feet well daily especially between the toes. Surgical spirit applied between the toes can reduce maceration.

Wear cotton socks to absorb moisture and change daily. Wash socks at 60 degrees to reduce fungal spores. If your feet sweat a lot then change socks more often. Wear shoes made of breathable material such as leather.

Daily topical application of anti fungal creams, powders and sprays treat the fungal infection by suppressing and destroying the fungal spores. Always read patient information leaflets before starting treatment or speak to your pharmacist. These include medication such as Clotrimazole, Terbinafine and Ketoconazole.

Treatment often requires a longer course to prevent re-infection (2-4 weeks). If you are prone to fungal skin infections especially between toes daily application of antifungal spray to dry feet can help control this.

Spores can also live in footwear so change shoes regularly and treat with antifungal powder or spray.

Special note

Fungal skin infections can often be confused with other skin conditions such as Eczema, Psoriasis and Urticaria. If you do not respond to topical treatment it is advisable to speak to your GP, practice nurse or pharmacist.

<https://cop.org.uk/foot-health/common-foot-problems/athletes-foot/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fungal-nail-infection/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/antifungal-medicines/>

Fungal nail infections

Onychomycosis, or fungal toe nails, affects about 20% of the population and can be difficult to treat. They often present early as yellow/white lines or spots under the surface of a nail and can gradually progress to cause the whole nail to be yellow, thickened and crumbly.

It is caused by fungal spores penetrating the nail and destroying the keratin in the nail. Fungal nails often cause no pain or discomfort other than being unsightly and difficult to cut.

Treatment

Fungal nails can be difficult to treat as nails grow slowly and fungal spores are deeper in the nail.

Topical treatment of paints and lacquers are available over the counter and require filing of the nail before application. This can be daily or weekly as advised by the manufacture and often required long courses of treatment (6 months+)

Nail softeners such as Emtrix can improve the appearance of nails and make them easier to cut.

Tea Tree oil has anti-fungal properties and a diluted solution applied to nails can help manage fungal infections.

Podiatrists can help to reduce the thickness of nails, this will aid with topical treatment penetration as well as improve the appearance of nails.

Oral medication is available however can have side effects, requires months of treatment and regular blood tests. This must be prescribed by your GP or Practice Nurse.

Special note

Damage or trauma to nails can cause nails to grow thick and distorted. Thick nails often have a yellow/dark colour however do not crumble or split when cut. Eczema, Psoriasis and systemic illness can cause nails to change appearance also. In this case nails often will not get better however can be removed if troublesome.