



Nail Fungus a Sneaky Adversary! *By John Tassone, DPM*

We see the commercials and hear about the home remedies; Vaseline; tea tree oil; diluted bleach; white cider vinegar, and numerous others. Nail fungus, or onychomycosis, is estimated to infect 20% of the population. It's most common in adults with studies showing that it can affect 60% of the elderly. With some, it's a cosmetic issue with nails becoming discolored (cloudy, yellow, brown) and thick, difficult to cut with debris collecting under the nail. For others, there's discomfort as the thick nail puts pressure on the sensitive nail bed. Nail deformation can also occur causing ingrown nails which can lead to infection.

Nail fungus has less to do with cleanliness and more to do with environmental organisms – dermatophytes, yeast and others – which are in the soil, on our floors, in our shoes, and virtually anywhere our feet travel. Fungus particularly likes dark, moist, closed spaces (picture your shoes in 110 degree temperatures for 8 hours). So no matter how much we clean, we only temporarily lower the number of organisms in any particular area. Nail

fungus is also contagious. While you can get it from others it is not as easy to spread as the skin version (athletes foot), but is still possible. So why do some people get nails fungus while others never do? It has to do with our immune systems. Some people are born with a deficiency to fight off fungal infections and others who are immunodeficient due to illness, medication, or for any reason, are also susceptible.

Fortunately, there is treatment which is strongly recommended for those:

- With a history of cellulitis (skin infection) of the leg, ankle, or foot, especially if it has happened more than once
- With diabetes, vein problems, or edema
- Who have pain due to nail fungus
- Who are immunocompromised
- Desiring treatment for cosmetic reasons

Those who do not fall into these categories do not require treatment and contrary to rumor, the fungus will not spread into the system and cause harm.

Treatment options include topical and systemic medications, laser

treatment and surgery. Topical and oral medications are the mainstay of treatment. There are three topical medications indicated for nail fungus with various protocols and success rates. The most common oral medication is Lamisil which is taken once per day for 90 days and is, by far, the least expensive and has the best success rate (over 70%). As with all medications, there are potential side effects to consider. Laser treatment is safe but success rates are lower than the oral medications. Insurance does not cover laser treatment and the treatments are expensive. Surgical removal of the nail, whether permanent or temporary, is reserved for severely painful nails, bacterial infections and for those not responding to treatment and prefer the nail gone. We do just fine without nails; however, removal is not necessary for treatment. There is no good evidence to suggest removing the nail and treating yields better results than just treating the condition alone.

If you've been ignoring discolored or deformed toe nails, schedule a visit!

Welcome Samantha Murphy, PA-C!

Samantha Murphy, PA-C has joined the Thunderbird IM team and will be seeing patients at the Glendale suite G-2 location beginning on June 19th. In addition to her years of experience caring for surgical and trauma patients, Samantha has worked in private practice and continues to volunteer in the community. She graduated at the top of her class at Midwestern University with a Master of Medical Science, Physician Assistant Studies.

LOCATIONS

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