



Everett Foot Clinic

Onychomycosis

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What is Onychomycosis ?

Nail infections that can be caused by a variety of fungi, yeasts, or molds. They take hold around and under the nail after an injury or illness and thrive on moisture or closeness.

In the type of onychomycosis that occurs most often, fungus enters just under the tip of the nail, moving steadily toward the cuticle. The infection may cause a buildup of keratin (what skin, hair and nails are made of) under the nail, raising it and causing discoloration.

Fungal nail infection doesn't just happen overnight. But if left untreated, it can infect the whole nail and even move to other nails.



In a mild case of onychomycosis, only one or two nails may be affected and less than half the nail shows any discoloration.



A moderate case of nail fungus can involve several nails. More than half of each nail may be thickened and discolored. The nails can also be misshapen and can start to split.



In severe cases, many nails are affected and are brittle, discolored and misshapen. Thickened nails may start lifting from the nail bed. Patients may feel pain and have difficulty walking or using their fingers. As you can see, untreated nail fungus can have debilitating effects.

Treating Onychomycosis

Your doctor may select treatment options appropriate for you based on:

- Your overall health
- Other medications you might be taking
- Your ability to follow a treatment plan that may include other medications
- Your comfort level with topical medication

Treatment Options

Do nothing, but infection usually will spread to involve all nails in months to years.

1. **Topical medication**- may prevent spread and keep from worsening, but rarely do they eliminate infection.
2. **Oral medication**- 75% effective on its own, but must treat for a minimum of 3 months and may require blood tests on several occasions
3. **Removal of nail plate**- to expose infection and then treat with topical medication. Works 75-80% of the time.
4. **Removing the nail plate and destroying the root**- so no nail will grow back. This will allow for elimination of infection.
5. **Removing the nail plate and treating with topical and oral medication**- this will allow for 95-98% of elimination in the quickest time. Usually minimally painful since infected nail is not well attached to the nail bed.