



## TOE NAILS AND TOE NAIL FUNGUS

This is a common disorder that makes the nails thick, crack, yellowed, and unattractive. It almost never causes anything more than an ugly appearance. It is common in people with diabetes and those over 65 years old. The fungus is not something you get from a shower. Rather, it is normally on your skin, in your shoes, in your shower. Something in your body changes so that it can get a foothold in your nails. The result is thick, often yellowed, cracking, ugly nails.

### ORAL MEDICATION

Medicines like Lamisil (advertised on TV) and fluconazole (diflucan) do work often better than 80% of the time. Unfortunately, these have some rare, but significant consequences to your liver and kidneys. The News and Observer ran an article about a gentleman who was in 30's with 2 kids who died from liver failure after taking these, leaving 2 small children. Not only that, but it is expensive; a 1 year treatment course can run up to \$1000. And, the commercials do not highlight that there is up to a 50% recurrence rate! To me this is not beneficial enough to warrant its use. I do not recommend this for most patients.

### TOPICAL MEDICATION

These are cheap, safe, and mildly effective. You can apply Lotrimin cream (or alternative that you find in the athletes foot section of the grocery or pharmacy) to the nail daily and it will work about 30% of the time. Although Vicks VapoRub has been written up in the N&O, I know of no scientific study that shows its effectiveness. But, it will not harm you.

### JUST MANAGE WHAT YOU HAVE

Tricks to taking care of these nails are to apply Vaseline to the nail every day (if you are not going to use the Lotrimin). After a good hot bath or shower, they are softer and this is a good time to cut them. Try the hand held plyers appearing type of clipper for thicker nails.

Sand them down with 100 grit sand paper or an Emory board. You can sand the top to make them less thick. Avoid skin abrasion. If you do this after a bath, you will have an easier time since they are softer.

Paint them. For women, you can sand them and paint them, and move on.

### I AM DIABETIC, HOW DO I TRIM MY NAILS SAFELY?

To trim your nails safely, you have to be able to see and be able to reach. It is perfectly ok to have your family member or trusted friend do it if you cannot, as long as they can see and can reach them well. If you cannot do it yourself safely and do not have someone who can, you can see a pedicurist. Bring your own Emory board or sandpaper so that what they use is clean. You want to avoid any injury to the skin.

There are other disorders that are not fungus (psoriasis and other skin disorders can have nail changes associated). Fungus is the most common. If you are concerned, a dermatologist is the person to ask.

### REFERENCES

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