

Athlete's foot and fungal nail infections

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What is athlete's foot/fungal nail infection?

It is a fungal infection, which thrives in moist warm areas of the skin such as in-between the toes (athlete's foot) and can spread to the nails (fungal nail infection). It can occur in any age group.

This leaflet is intended to provide simple practical information about how you can self-manage this problem.

Prevention

- Dry your feet thoroughly each time you wash them, particularly between the toes – applying surgical spirit will help to keep your feet dry.
- Wear cotton socks and shoes made from natural materials which will help your feet “breathe”.
- Avoid walking bare foot in communal places.
- Avoid sharing towels with someone with athlete's foot.

What are the symptoms?

Nails

- Thickening of the affected nail
- Brittleness
- Discoloration of nail – yellow/brown
- Deformity – oddly shaped nail that may separate from the skin at the free edge
- Lack of growth

Skin

- White and soggy skin
- Small spot like blisters
- Cracking, flaking, peeling or blistering of the skin, which may become painful and bleed.
- Red and raw looking skin which is often itchy.
- Dry scaly rash on bottom and sides of the feet



How is it diagnosed?

Clinically by its symptoms but your GP may wish to take a skin or nail sample for analysis before prescribing treatment.

How is it treated?

- The infection is unlikely to go away on its own and because it is so easy to spread to other people and other parts of the body, it should be treated.
- There are various creams, sprays and powders available from the chemist.
- Those that have diabetes should be extra careful about foot care as sometimes loss of feeling is experienced in the feet and infection may not be noticed.

Why does athlete's foot tend to come back?

- You may not have got rid of the infection completely last time you treated it.
- The fungus can leave spores, which can lie dormant in the skin and can reappear if it is not completely destroyed.
- If your feet are prone to becoming sweaty, they are an ideal place for the fungus to thrive.
- You might pick up an infection by wearing shoes that have been used by someone who has athlete's foot.

Are there any possible complications?

Not treating this condition may lead to breaks in the skin which could become infected with bacteria and cause a serious foot or leg infection.

Follow up

If you still have concerns contact your GP or Podiatrist to discuss alternative treatment options.

Help available

Your pharmacist will be happy to advise you on the range of over-the-counter treatment options that are available to you.

Further information

For further advice and information, please contact an HCPC registered podiatrist at your local clinic.

North Devon Podiatry Services

Email: ndht.podiatry@nhs.net

Tel: 01271 341509

Address: North Devon Podiatry Services, Barnstaple Health Centre, Vicarage Street, Barnstaple, North Devon, EX32 7BH

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

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