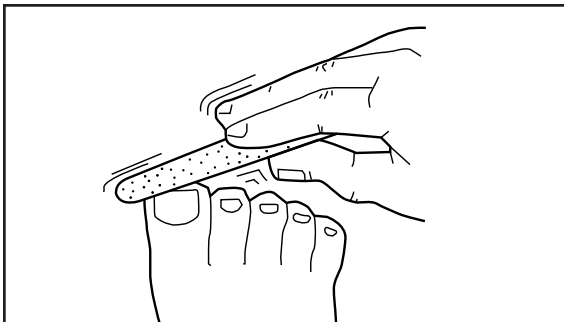


What Is Toenail Fungus?

- Toenail fungus is a painless condition of the toenail that occurs when a yeast-like fungus (similar to the one that causes athlete's foot) grows under and within the toenail.
- The fungus can cause the nail to become thick, discolored, or loose or cause it to crumble.

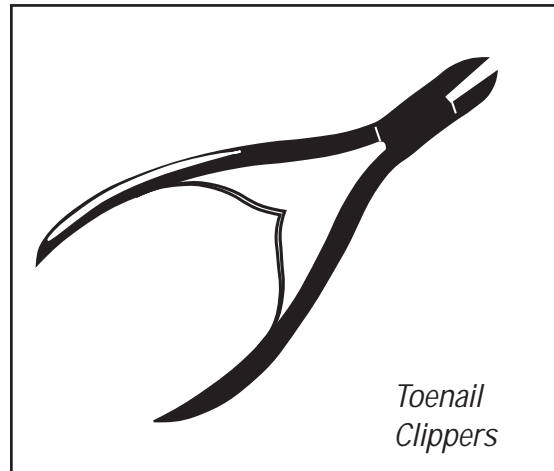
What Causes Toenail Fungus?

- This condition is caused by different kinds of fungus, yeast or mold which grow within the toenails when the right environment exists.
- Conditions which may aid the growth of the fungus include...
 - A history of trauma or damage to the toenail
 - Hereditary factors
 - Sweaty socks and shoes with poor air circulation



What Your Podiatrist Can Do

- It is almost impossible to completely and permanently cure toenail fungus. Your general doctor or podiatrist may not recommend treatment.
- Treatment to control the growth of the fungus varies with the degree of concern you have as a result of discomfort, appearance, or hygiene.
- Usually, any treatment other than permanent removal of the toenail will require a lifetime of ongoing home maintenance.
- If your toenail(s) are painful, very difficult to care for, or disfiguring, your podiatrist may recommend permanent removal (so the nail never grows back).



Treatment

- No treatment. This is a reasonable option especially if the nails are not painful.
- Home nail care using heavy toenail clippers (shown below) and heavy emery boards, hand files, or grinders. Hint: these are best used after soaking or bathing the foot when the nail is softer.
- Application of over-the-counter liquid antifungal medication (e.g., Lotrimin®, Mycelex®, Tinactin®) daily after bathing. These medications will not cure or eliminate the fungus in your toenail.
- Oral antifungal medications are rarely used because of a high failure rate, the need to take the medicine for a long period of time (6-12 months), and possible drug reactions.

Other Helpful Hints

- Wear dry shoes and socks. Do not allow your feet to remain wet.
- Use natural fibers (such as cotton) and avoid plastic or rubber shoes/soles.
- Change shoes and socks frequently.
- Regular nail care and trimming (as described above) helps prevent problems.
- Use powder regularly in shoes and socks.

Note:

Routine nail care is not a covered Health Plan benefit. Nail care is provided for certain members with severe circulation disorders. Talk with your personal physician or podiatrist if you have any questions.

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The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have further questions, please consult your health care provider.

