

Don't Spend Another Spring Hiding Your Toes

Don't look now, but sandal season is fast approaching. In only a few short months, the cold weather will be behind us and it will be time to pull the sandals out of storage. With that in mind, now is the best time to address those unsightly nail and skin conditions affecting your feet.



Onychomycosis, or fungal nails, are caused by an infection of the nail plate due to a dermatophyte. Many times the nail will become thick, brittle, and discolored with either yellow or white streaking. In addition, a large amount of debris will form under the nail plate. As the infection worsens, the nail plate may split or even fall off completely.

Many fungal nail infections can be traced back to a minor injury, such as stubbing the affected toe or dropping something on it. This causes a loosening of the nail from the underlying skin and thus an increased risk of fungal infection. Other systemic disorders, such as Diabetes Mellitus and poor arterial circulation, can lead to an increased risk as well.

Some studies have also shown a relationship between pedicures and fungal nail infections. All reputable businesses will sterilize instruments between customers. However, there is a chance you could get a fungal nail infection if the instruments are not properly treated. Most spas will allow you to purchase a set of instruments and bring them with you for a pedicure. This will eliminate the risk of cross-contamination from another customer.

Once you get a fungal infection, it can be difficult to cure. Normal treatment consists of either a topical antifungal liquid or an oral course of antifungal medication. With either, it

is important to note that the infection will not resolve quickly. It will take three to six months to see results as a new nail grows.



Plantar warts are caused by a viral infection in the outer layer of the skin. Places such as public pools, showers, and locker rooms are typically where viruses thrive. The virus is picked up at one of these locations and enters the skin through a small opening. Before long, a small lesion can appear on the bottom of the foot. The wart will exhibit a raised surface and many small, black or red dots. It's usually painful when squeezed from side to side.

Because plantar warts only reside in the outer layer of the skin, treatment is aimed at destruction of the skin around the lesion. This can be through acid application, freezing, or laser ablation. Often times a drying agent will be used in conjunction with all of these modalities.

Calluses and corns are both a thickening of the skin caused by an area of increased pressure. Corns are found on the toes, typically on the top or in between. Corns that are located on the top of the toes are due to hammertoes that rub when wearing closed-toe shoes. The second and fifth toes are the most common locations in this instance. Corns that are located between the toes are usually due to a small bone spur.

In milder cases, the corns can be controlled with periodic trimming, padding, and wearing wider shoes. However, most corns will remain until the underlying problem is addressed. X-rays and a thorough exam are the best way to identify the cause of a corn and the associated long-term solution.

Calluses are found on the bottom of the feet and are also related to deformities resulting in increased pressure. Bunions, flat feet, and high-arched feet will all greatly affect the way you walk and the subsequent pressures applied to the foot.

Only by fixing the underlying prob-

lem can the calluses be eliminated. An analysis of your gait pattern, foot-type, and underlying bone structure can provide essential clues as to the cause of the calluses. Frequently, custom-made orthotics can relieve areas of pinpoint pressure and eliminate callus formation.

Call (314)739-8863 for an appointment



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