

How to protect your feet and toes

No more nail fungus

Nail fungus is widespread, extremely persistent and will not heal on its own – and will typically follow a fungal foot disease. It is vital that affected foot care customers treat the painful scourge consistently, and do their best to protect themselves against recurrences.

Nail fungus usually starts at the free edge of the nail, and progresses towards the centre. The symptoms are, initially, rather unnoticeable and often overlooked: The pearly gloss of the nail plate becomes dulled, and the nails turn an opaque, cloudy colour. Yellow to brownish discolourations are typical as well. Keratinization occurs under the nail plate over the course of the infection. The nail thickens, becoming crumbly, and partially lifts up from the nail bed. In the worst case, the fungus can destroy the entire nail.

Treatment

Firmly embedded in the nail and nail root (nail matrix), the fungus is poorly accessible to therapeutic agents. Which is why nail fungus is one of the most stubborn fungal infections, requiring long-term treatment and a great deal of patience from the patient. It is recommended to have nail mycosis investigated by a doctor. The doctor can identify the type of fungal infection by means of a laboratory test, and then decide which treatment provides the best chances of recovery.

Treatment can be done systemically, e.g. with tablets. The drugs used in this case contain active substances such as terbinafine, itraconazole, griseofulvin and fluconazole, and are only available by

prescription. Alternatively, nail fungus can be treated with a topically-applied nail polish containing active ingredients. In this case, polishes containing five or eight percent antifungal active ingredients amorolfine and ciclopirox, as well as a preparation with one percent bifonazole and 40 percent urea, are available in pharmacies.

Additionally: protecting healthy nails

Treatment with topical nail polish is generally only recommended if less than 50 percent of the nail plate is affected and the matrix is not involved, according to current expert opinion. It is also recommended to have the affected nails sanded by a podologist. Grinding down the nail plate not only reduces fungal mass, but facilitates penetration of the active ingredient into the nail and the underlying skin as well. Since fungal nail disease is highly infectious, measures should also be taken to protect healthy nails. Special nail protection preparations (GEHWOL med Nail and Skin Protection Oil, also available in foot care practices) with the anti-fungal active ingredient clotrimazole are suitable for this purpose. These inhibit fungal growth, while their conditioning formula with wheat germ oil and panthenol strengthens the skin barrier in the sensitive nail fold to prevent fungal penetration.

How to prevent a fungal infection:

- **Washing the feet:** Daily cleaning removes dirt, sweat and surface-level bacteria and fungi. A relaxing foot bath with natural essential oils (such as GEHWOL FUSSKRAFT Herbal Foot Bath) is highly beneficial for both deodorizing and disinfecting.
- **Drying the feet:** Thorough drying after any contact with water is vital. Important: Don't forget the spaces between the toes!
- **Applying cream to the feet:** Creams with premium care components that help ensure an intact skin barrier should be used daily. For example, GEHWOL FUSSKRAFT GREEN from the foot care practice contains nourishing aloe vera, jojoba oil and shea butter as well as antimicrobial and anti-fungal ingredients such as deozinc, climbazole and oils of rosemary and lavender.
- **Airing out the feet:** Foot fungus thrives particularly well in the warm and humid environment found within enclosed footwear, such as rubber boots, air-impermeable athletic shoes and synthetic socks. This can be avoided by changing shoes from day to day, and letting them air out well after each wearing.
- **Daily changes with socks made from natural fibres** help to improve the climate in the shoe. Good additional measures: Air out your shoes and regularly spray them with a foot and shoe deodorant (such as GEHWOL Foot + Shoe Deodorant).
- **Avoid constricting the feet:** Tight, poorly fitting footwear chafes the foot skin, creating entry points for foot fungi.
- **Protecting the feet:** Wearing bathing sandals protects against fungal infections at swimming pools, saunas, hotels, in changing rooms and communal showers.