Dear Alice,

I think I might have a toenail fungus infection (onychomycosis). Should I purchase over-the-counter medication and try to remedy the situation on my own, or should I go directly to a podiatrist to evaluate this problem? I do have an excellent insurance and prescription policy!

Answer

Dear Reader,

Hopefully this response can toe-tally help you figure out how to deal with your potential onychomycosis, which may be alleviated through over-the-counter treatments or those prescribed by a health care provider. But first, it might be helpful to be aware of some of the common signs and symptoms of toenail fungus, which you may be experiencing:

- Thickening of the nail
- Brownish, whitish, or yellowish discoloration of the nail
- Debris accumulating under the nail and along its edges
- Smelliness
- Brittle crumbling or breakage of the nail

If any of these ring true for you, luckily, there are plenty of treatments to try! You may want to start treatment with over-the-counter antifungal nail creams and ointments from your local pharmacy along with trimming the nail. However, if this doesn't work, it's best to check in with a health care provider. After examining your feet and nails, your health care provider may prescribe antifungal medication, medicated nail polish, or antifungal cream.

Stepping ahead, here are some tips to help prevent getting fungal toenail infections in the future:

- Wear shoes that allow some air throughout.
- Be sure to wash and dry your feet thoroughly every day.
- Wear clean socks each day.
- Keep your toenails carefully trimmed and disinfect clippers after use.
- Don't share your pedicure tools with others and if you're treating yourself to a pedicure, make sure the salon disinfects between customers!
- Avoid using nail polish on your toes.
- Keep flip flops on your feet when walking around pools and locker rooms.
• Use antifungal powder with any old shoes.

Hopefully these tips can keep your feet fungus free in the future. Kudos to you for keeping on your toes regarding foot health!

Alice!
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Published date:
Mar 08, 2002
Last reviewed on:
May 25, 2018

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