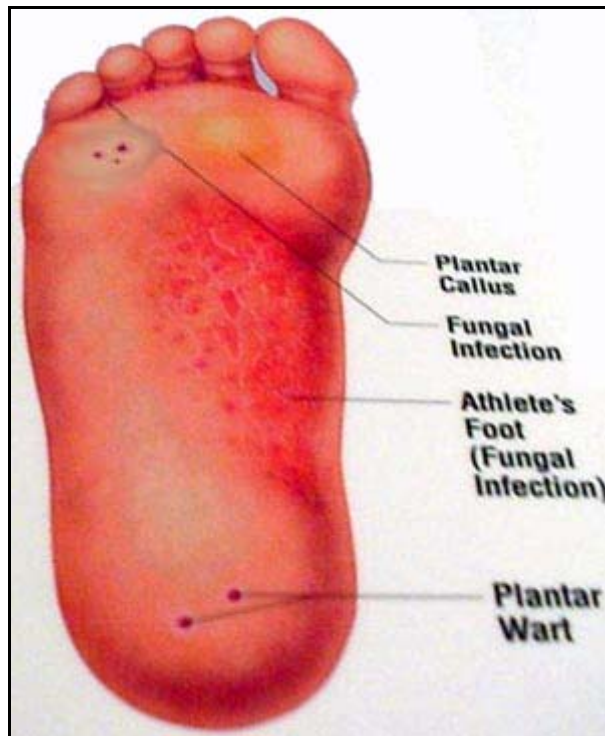


## Skin and Nail Disorders

### Athlete's Foot, Fungal Nails Disorders and Foot Warts

It's hard to be happy when your feet hurt. Seventy-five percent of us experience some type of foot ailment at some time. Sometimes it is as simple as a corn or callus. Sometimes a more serious condition will require surgery. Because foot problems are so common, many people accept the pain and discomfort as normal. Most foot ailments, however, can be successfully treated.

Proper foot care is the easiest way to prevent the onset of ailments and to minimize problems. This brochure addresses some of the common causes and treatments of athlete's foot, fungal toenail infections and foot warts.



#### Athlete's foot

Athlete's foot is a common fungal infection of the feet, usually occurring between the toes.

#### What causes athlete's foot?

It is caused by a fungus that becomes active when exposed to a warm and humid environment or when there is a change in the condition of the skin. Athlete's foot is not found just in locker rooms. Any moist environment will harbor fungi. Shoes and socks provide a good breeding ground because they tend to accumulate perspiration and moisture.

#### How do I know I have athlete's foot?

Symptoms include skin pain, burning and itching, cracking and scaling, and swelling.

#### Can I get athlete's foot if I'm not an athlete?

Anyone can get athlete's foot. Some people are more prone to fungal infections because of their age, heredity or health condition. Older people are more susceptible because, as their skin ages, it becomes thinner and drier and is less able to guard against fungal infections. People with diseases that lower their resistance to infection are also at an increased risk and should take preventive measures to keep athlete's foot in check.

### Can athlete's foot spread?

Yes. Sometimes the infection can spread to the soles of the feet and to the toenails. If left untreated, it can infect other parts of the body.

### How do I treat athlete's foot?

Treat it right away, when symptoms first occur, to stop the infection from spreading to other parts of the body. Over-the-counter antifungal medications are normally very effective for most case of athlete's foot. Follow the package directions and don't stop treatment too soon. If you stop treating the condition as soon as your symptoms go away, some infection may still be present and the condition may recur.

### Footnote

**Your feet contain 250,000 sweat glands** and excrete as much as half a pint of moisture each day.

*Source: American podiatric Medical Association*

### Prevention and Treatment of Athlete's Foot

- **Keep your feet – and your bath or shower area – clean and dry.**
- **Always wear clean socks.**
- **Avoid wearing the same shoes two days in a row (they need time to dry out).**
- **Try not to walk barefoot in community areas.**
- **Always wash and dry feet carefully, especially between the toes.**
- **Use foot powder to help keep feet dry.**
- **Use an over-the-counter antifungal medication to treat infected areas when symptoms first appear. Be sure to use the medication for the entire recommended period of time.**
- **If the infection does not respond to treatment, see your podiatrist.**

### Do you have sweaty feet?

The tendency to sweat excessively is called hyperhidrosis. In addition to causing foot odor, sweaty feet can promote fungus growth (such as athlete's foot) and other infections. If your feet sweat, be especially careful to keep them clean and dry. Use an antiperspirant powder or spray and change socks whenever they become damp.

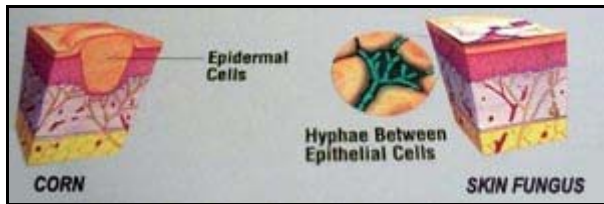
### Fungal Nail Infections

Fungal infection of the toenails is a common health condition, although many people assume it's only a cosmetic problem. If a fungal infection is ignored, it could spread and impair your ability to walk.



### Why are my toenails thick and yellow?

Thickened, brittle, discolored nails often indicate a fungal infection. There are other conditions such as psoriasis that can cause changes in the nail appearance. Fungal infections may not be painful in the beginning. The nail may begin to show small patches of white or yellowish-tan color. It may become brittle and split. As the infection progresses, the nail becomes thicker and deformed and may begin to grow at an angle. Pain may develop as the deformed nail causes pressure inside shoes.



### What causes a fungal infection?

Fungi, along with dirt and debris, become trapped under the toenail and penetrate the softer nail bed. Nails attacked by fungus thicken, discolor and may separate from the nail bed or even crumble away.

### How is it treated?

Your podiatrist can recommend appropriate treatment, depending on the severity of the infection. Medication is often prescribed. In some cases, surgery may be needed to remove the infected nail.

### Prevention and treatment of Fungal Nail Infections

Fungal infections, like athlete's foot, develop in warm, damp environments.

- **Keep your feet clean and dry** to resist infection.
- **Wash feet with soap and water**, and dry thoroughly.
- **Wear clean socks** and let your shoes dry out between wearings.
- **Try not to walk barefoot** in community areas.
- **Keep toenails trimmed short** and straight across (use toenail clippers).
- **Wear shower shoes** in public bathing areas.
- **Prescription antifungal medication** may be recommended for treatment.
- **In some cases it may be necessary to surgically remove** the infected nail.

### Warts

Warts are skin growths. They can appear anywhere on your feet, but most commonly grow on the soles (plantar warts). Most warts are harmless and benign (non-cancerous), although they can be painful. If untreated, warts can grow to an inch or more in diameter and cover the entire sole of the foot.



### What causes warts?

Warts are caused by a virus. Like all viruses, they are contagious and can be spread from one person to another or from one part of the body to another. Children and teenagers tend to get warts more often adults. Some people are immune and will never develop warts.

### What do warts look like?

Plantar warts are hard and flat, with a rough surface and well-defined boundaries. Most are gray or brown with black pinpoints in the center. If you are unsure about any growth, consult your doctor.



### How can I treat a wart?

Warts sometimes may spontaneously disappear and later reappear in the same location. Treatment may include over-the-counter medications or a simple surgical procedure. If left untreated, warts can grow to an inch or more in diameter and can spread into cluster of several warts.

### Ingrown Toenails

Ingrown toenails occur when a nail curves down at the sides and grows into the skin. This can be painful and invite infection. Ingrown toenails happen most often to the big toe.

### What causes ingrown toenails?

Ingrown toenails are often caused by improper trimming. They can also be caused by crowding of toes or pressure in shoes, repeated trauma to the feet from normal activities, or heredity.

### How can I prevent ingrown toenails?

It's most important to trim nails carefully with clean, sharp toenail clippers. Avoid injuring the adjacent skin.

### How can I treat an ingrown toenail?

Don't attempt to remove any part of an infected nail and don't use over-the-counter medications. If a nail continues to grow inward despite proper trimming, see your podiatrists for evaluation and treatment.

#### **Footnote**

**If you have persistent foot pain, see your podiatrist right away.** Prompt foot care may help prevent the later onset of painful knee, hip and lower back problems.

#### **Six Steps to healthier feet**

Taking good care of your feet is a daily investment in your lifelong health and comfort. You can prevent or minimize most problems by adopting a routine of daily foot care and following these simple guidelines.

1. **Wear comfortable shoes and socks** that fit your feet.
2. **Wash and dry your feet thoroughly**, especially between the toes.
3. **Keep your toenails trimmed short** and straight across.
4. **Apply cream or lotion to feet** to keep skin smooth and supple.
5. **Wear clean socks or stockings and avoid wearing the same shoes two days** in a row.
6. **See your podiatrist** for any severe or persistent foot problems.