

PENN FARM
PODIATRY

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Fungal Infections of the Foot

Is it fungus?

Often your podiatrist will be certain of the diagnosis based on your clinical history, symptoms and the appearance of the foot.

A sample can be sent to pathology to help find your correct diagnosis. The treatment might commence before the result is received. Fungal infections, particularly of the nail, have a high incidence of “false negatives’. This means the test may be repeated.

Conditions that cause similar symptoms to the skin and nails include eczema, psoriasis, and trauma.

Oral Medication

Two common drugs are terbinafine and itraconazole. You would need to discuss this with your GP who may prescribe the medication if appropriate.

Terbinafine is a more modern drug with good efficacy and fewer unpleasant side effects. You would need to take it for many months - possibly up to a year. Like many medications, it is known to carry a small risk of liver injury. Therefore it is not used in patients with liver disease and blood tests to monitor liver function are recommended (BNF, 2020). The risk of liver disease in healthy adults is 0.1% (O’Sullivan et al, 1996).

Itraconazole may be taken continuously or “pulsed” - that means you would take a higher dose for one week per month.

Further reading:

BNF (https://bnf.nice.org.uk/drug/terbinafine.html)

O’Sullivan, D. Needham, C. Bangs, A. Atkin, K. And Kendall, F. 1996 Postmarketing surveillance of oral terbinafine in the UK: report of a large cohort study British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology 42 (5) pp 559-65

https://www.foot.expert/post/2019/12/08/terbinafinesafety

Preventative measures that can cure:

- Wash feet daily (rinse off soap)
- Dry between toes
- Surgical spirits - this helps if there’s interdigital maceration
- Shoes and socks to be natural fibres (bamboo, cotton or wool)
- Change socks at least daily - more often after exercise and in hot weather
- Alternate shoes to let them dry out fully
- Consider putting your socks through on a hot wash (check the label to avoid shrinking!)
- Consider replacing your shoes and socks
- Do not leave nail polish on for extended periods of time

Treatments for fungal skin infections:

- Topical terbinafine cream or gel
- Lamisil once may be recommended
- Oral terbinafine may be considered for recalcitrant infections
- Powders in shoes - these usually contain miconazole

Treatments for fungal nail infections:

- No treatment
- See your podiatrist to have your nails trimmed and drilled back.
- Use a topical treatment containing terbinafine or amorolfine - this will work better when combined with regular podiatry appointments
- Oral medication