

ASKtheEXPERT



Healthy Skin

with Dr. William Griffin

Nails

Another joy of aging is the thickened and crumbling of our toenails. This can occur at any age, but with each decade we age, our chances of fungus of the nails increase.

Fortunately, new medicines have recently been introduced to reverse this process for many people. Lamisil and Sporanox are new oral medicines which are a great improvement over the Griseofulvin. Lamisil is especially safe and usually does not interact with other medicines. The medicines usually need to be taken for 4-5 months for toenails and 2-3 months for fingernails. The old griseofulvin usually takes a year of continuous medication and has a habit of causing headaches. Trimming the nails usually enhances the process.

Unfortunately, some nails are damaged and will not improve because they are not infected. Also men and women past menopause frequently get reinfected.

For many, infected nails are just ugly, but for patients with circulatory or metabolic problems, they can be a potentially severe problem leading to chronic secondary infection, ulcer or amputation. Diabetics form the largest number of patients with these concerns, but others with arteriosclerosis and reduced blood flow to feet form another at risk group. Those with decreased sensation of feet and toes also are at risk.

Also, be aware that topical antifungals are usually not sufficient to actually clear an infected nail, though used with oral antifungals they may speed healing and reduce spread to other toes.