

# Road to Better Health

Twice Monthly  
Health & Wellness  
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## Ask the Nurse Practitioner



### Nail Fungal Infections

Q: Why don't creams and ointments seem to work on toenail fungal infections?

A: Topical preparations do not adequately penetrate the nail bed. Often times, oral antifungal medications are required over a period of several months with monitoring of liver function.

Q: What does good circulation have to do with healthy nails?

A: The nail plate (finger or toe nail), has several layers of skin beneath the plate. The matrix lies beneath the plate, which receives nutrition for the nail from adequate blood flow. Healthy nails grow as a result of nutrition from the blood supply.

Q: When should I see a provider about nail fungal infections?

A: If the site becomes painful and/or the infection has spread. If you have an immune-deficiency condition or diabetes, you may want to visit your provider because healing may take longer, and medication may be required.

## Nail Fungal Infections – Causes, Risk Factors, Symptoms, Treatment and Prevention

By Patricia Smith, FNP – Knoxville, TN

Toenail fungus, also known as onychomycosis, is an infection underneath the surface of the nail caused by fungi. It is caused by a special type of fungus known as a dermatophyte. Discoloration and a foul odor of the nail bed may be present. Debris may collect beneath the nail plate, and often times white marks appear on the nail plate. This type of infection is capable of spreading to other toenails, the skin, or fingernails (all nail bed plates are susceptible). If ignored, the infection can spread and possibly impair the ability to walk. The resulting thicker nails are difficult to trim, and make walking painful when wearing shoes. Topical treatments do not work well with these infections because nail beds are relatively impenetrable. Up to 10% of all adults in Western countries have fungal infections of the nails. This percentage increases to 20% of adults who are 60 or older. Toenail fungus is often ignored because the infection can be present for years without causing any pain.



### Causes

Because it is difficult to avoid contact with microscopic organisms like fungi, the toenails are especially vulnerable around damp areas such as swimming pools, locker rooms, and showers, for example. Injury to the nail bed may make it more susceptible to all types of infection, including fungal infection. Those who suffer from chronic diseases, such as diabetes, circulatory problems, or immune-deficiency conditions are especially prone to fungal nails. Other contributing factors may be a history of athlete's foot and excessive perspiration.

**UrgentCareTravel – Booth #23167**



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*Nail Fungal Infections article continued on next page*

## Nail Fungal Infections (continued)

### Risk Factors:

- Aging. Most common risk factor due to diminished blood circulation, longer exposure to fungi, and nails which grow more slowly and thicken.
- Perspiring heavily, or having moist skin for a long time
- Minor skin or nail injuries
- Deformed nail or nail disease
- Immune system problems
- Chronic illnesses such as diabetes and circulatory problems
- Wearing footwear that does not allow air circulation
- Going barefoot in damp, public places such as swimming pools, gyms and shower rooms



### Symptoms:

- Nail brittleness
- Change in nail shape
- Crumbling of the outside edges of the nail
- Debris trapped under the nail
- Loosening or lifting up of the nail
- Loss of luster and shine on the nail surface
- Thickening of the nail
- White or yellow streaks on the side of the nail

### Treatment:

Treatment of onychomycosis is challenging because the infection is embedded within the nail, and is difficult to reach. It may take a year or more, since new nail growth must entirely replace old, infected growth. Over-the-counter creams and ointments usually do not help treat this condition. Prescription anti-fungal medications taken by mouth may help to clear the infection. Oral anti-fungal medications are typically taken for 2-3 months for toenails; a shorter time for fingernails. Liver function is usually monitored during treatment with certain oral anti-fungal medications.

### Prevention:

The American Podiatric Medical Association recommends the following for prevention of onychomycosis:

- Dry feet thoroughly after washing with soap and water
- Wear shower shoes in public areas
- Change socks, shoes and hosiery more than once daily
- Clip toenails straight across so that the nail does not extend beyond the tip of the toe
- Wear well-fitting shoes that allow for air circulation
- Wear socks made of synthetic fibers that “wick” away moisture
- Disinfect home pedicure instruments
- Do not apply nail polish to suspected sites of infection (discolored areas, for example)

## The Eyes Have It

By Jeff Owen, FNP – Oklahoma City, OK

Nearly one-half of Americans will eventually develop cataracts, which will affect vision. A less common eye disease, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), is the leading cause of blindness among older adults.

Concerning eye health, nutrition matters. For example, vitamin A deficiency causes night blindness and other problems. However, carrots are great for your eyes. Your body converts **beta carotene** in carrots to vitamin A. Other nutrients and plant compounds may also help protect vision. Lutein and Zeaxanthin (carotenoids), which are antioxidant pigments in many vegetables and fruits, are also found in the retina of the healthy eye, specifically in the macula (the part of the retina that is responsible for enhanced central vision). Lutein and Zeaxanthin act like sunglasses to filter against ultraviolet radiation and other harmful components of sunlight.

Following are nutrients most often promoted to preserve vision in healthy people and prevent AMD and/or cataracts:

- **Lutein and Zeaxanthin.** People with high dietary intakes or high blood levels of these carotenoids have a reduced risk of AMD and cataracts.
- **Vitamin C and E, selenium, beta carotene and other antioxidants.** Individuals who consume plant foods rich in these antioxidants are at reduced risk for cataracts and AMD. Research shows that vitamin E and beta carotene supplements do not reduce the risk of AMD. High doses of beta carotene supplements increase the risk of cancer in smokers.
- **Zinc.** Found in the retina, zinc is essential for good vision. Zinc may protect eye tissue from the damaging effects of light and from inflammation. However, supplemental zinc has **never** been found to be beneficial to healthy eyes. In fact, doses greater than 50 mg per day can have adverse effects. Unless you have AMD, get your zinc from food.
- **Omega-3 fats.** Intake of fish rich in omega-3 fats reduces AMD incidence and progression, and can possibly reduce cataract risk.
- **Herbal supplements.** Bilberry and Ginkgo. Bilberries contain carotenoids and other pigments (anthocyanins) that may be good for vision.

### Let Your Food Be Your Medicine

- **Eat colorful fruits and vegetables.** Leafy greens such as kale and spinach are rich in carotenoids and may protect against AMD and cataracts. Blueberries, blackberries, beets, broccoli and carrots are also excellent choices. Colorful foods—deep green, orange, yellow, purple, red, blue—contain the most carotenoids and other healthy pigments.
- **Healthy fats in fish and nuts** may benefit the retina.
- **Get more zinc,** which is plentiful in foods. Meat, seafood (especially oysters) and liver are rich sources of zinc. Brewer's yeast, milk and other dairy products, beans, wheat germ and whole grains also supply some zinc.
- **Lastly, smoking damages your eyes.** If you smoke, QUIT. Also, stay out of smoky rooms, avoid strong sunlight, and get regular eye exams.

Visit your local UrgentCareTravel clinic to discuss how you can support good vision in the years ahead.

### UrgentCareTravel Programs and Services

UrgentCareTravel's affordable **GOLD Healthcare Membership program** includes unlimited FREE visits (in-clinic services) at UrgentCareTravel locations. With health insurance plans costing more, providing less medical coverage and requiring higher deductible payments, UrgentCareTravel's **GOLD Healthcare Membership program** is a cost-effective option to address the healthcare needs of drivers, local businesses and communities. To enroll or get more information about the **Gold Healthcare Membership Program**, please contact a UCT clinic or send an e-mail to [services@urgentcaretravel.com](mailto:services@urgentcaretravel.com).

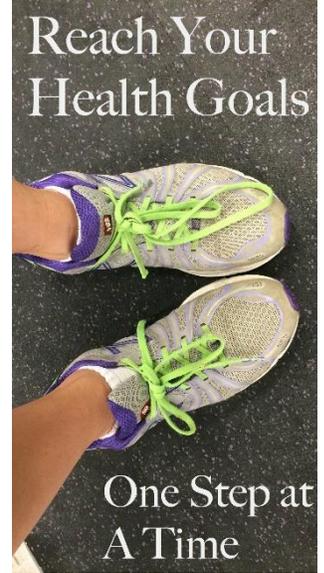
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## The Wellness Corner: Mindfulness and Taking Steps to Reach Your Health Goals

We have arrived at July, the half-way point of the year, and the time when many nutrition, fitness and health coaches urge us to reflect upon our progress toward our New Year resolutions. Have health goals been achieved, shown progress, or abandoned altogether? Now is the time to take stock of our situation and compare notes with what we established back in January. But is this really the best way to think of our progress toward our health and wellness goals?

Don't despair if you (like most of us) have forgotten those goals altogether....not because you've changed your mind as to their importance but usually because the frenzied priorities of everyday life step in to steal away your time and attention.

How to combat this challenge? Begin with the mindful realization of how the daily pressures and priorities of life make it challenging to modify our behavior. Rather than focusing on the overarching healthcare goal....resolve every new day (not just every new year) to wake up and do something (even a VERY small something) better than the day before. Maybe one particular morning you have 5-10 extra minutes...use that time to stretch, or walk. Or perhaps it is the choice of a baked potato over French fries for lunch.



**motivation**  
is what gets you started.  
**habit**  
is what keeps you going.

Realize that real progress toward larger health and wellness goals begins by mindful, daily commitment to small but consistent increments of progress. This mindfulness will enable your mental commitment to continue undeterred by the time challenges and priorities of everyday life. Eventually these tiny changes in a positive direction become like a wave....they grow ever more impressive and self-sustaining... eventually becoming a habit. Before long, your new habits will be evidenced as real progress toward your health goals.

We are all unique individuals....raised in different environments with unique cultural, socio-economic, educational, religious, family and genetic differences resulting in different beliefs, tastes, habits, opinions, strengths and weaknesses, etc. It is so tempting to compare and measure ourselves against current "socially accepted" standards of achievement and/or beauty only to fail miserably. STOP! You are absolutely unique....and while we all inhabit bodies that may function in remarkably similar fashion....below the surface similarities cease to exist! Remember to chart your progress against yesterday's "you" and not someone else who can never be you!

### About UrgentCareTravel

UrgentCareTravel (UCT), in partnership with Pilot Flying J, addresses one of the trucking industry's biggest challenges of offering easily accessible and affordable healthcare services for truck drivers. Located at Pilot Flying J Travel Centers, UCT clinics offer Occupational Medical services (DOT/non-DOT physicals, workers comp, sleep apnea screening, urine/hair drug screens, etc.) and Primary/Urgent Care services (chronic disease screening and management (e.g. diabetes, cholesterol, hypertension), blood pressure checks, Men's & Women's wellness exams, wound care, cold/cough/flu, upper respiratory infections, sinus infections, ear infections, muscle pain/strain, etc.).

### UrgentCareTravel Locations

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