

# Laser Treatment for Toenail Fungus

Laser therapy is the newest treatment we offer for fungal toenails and effectively kills the fungus and clears the nails in many patients. The laser works by penetrating the nail plate and destroys the fungus under the nail. There is no pain and no side effects. Best results and the best looking toenails occur with three laser sessions and the use of specific protocol.



## How to Get Started

Your first visit will be for a complete history and evaluation of your condition. If you have thick, fungal or painful toenails, this evaluation visit is almost always a covered insurance benefit. The evaluation visit is critical because there are many causes of thick and yellowed nails, and the best treatment will depend on your diagnosis. Not all thick nails are caused by fungal infection. Before we can determine if laser treatment would be effective for you we may need to take a sample of your nail to send for a lab test to determine if fungus is present.



## The Procedure

If we determine that laser treatment would likely be effective for you, we will schedule you for your laser treatment. On that visit, the following will occur:

- Toenails are thinned using a special toenail grinder
- Toenails are treated with the laser. The big toenails require about two minutes and the small nails about one minute. Total procedure is less than 30 minutes and there is no pain.
- You will be given detailed instructions on preventing reinfection of the nails.
- For best outcomes, laser treatment will be repeated at 3 months and at 6 months.

## Is the Treatment Covered by Insurance?

All insurance companies consider laser therapy a cosmetic procedure and do not cover the service. Most insurance carriers will, however, cover your initial visit for evaluation and diagnosis of your nail problem.

## What is the Cost of Laser Treatment for Fungal Nails?

Our philosophy is to keep the cost as low as possible and include all treatment in your initial fees so there are no surprises. The most effective outcomes are achieved with a total of three treatments and all three treatments are included in the total cost of \$590. You may see treatment advertised for less, but these prices are for only one treatment, which has not been shown to be as effective as the three treatment protocol. Although the laser treatment will not be covered by insurance, your initial visit, where we determine if you are a good candidate for laser therapy, can be billed to your insurance and normal co-pays will apply. If you do not have insurance coverage the evaluation visit cost is \$109.

## How Effective is Laser Treatment of Nail Fungus?

You may see some clinics advertising "88% success". First, avoid anyone who advertises this – or at least get a second opinion about your fungal nails before getting

treatment from them. The truth is that no one is quite sure of the success rate, nor has anyone defined exactly what success entails. We estimate success to be around 70%, but again, current studies are somewhat unclear.

### **Why are we the Best Clinic in the Seattle Area for Nail Laser Treatment?**

- **We will confirm that you have a fungal infection before treating you.** There are many causes of thick nails and the laser only works if a majority of the nail problem is caused by a fungal infection. About 30% of the patients that come in requesting laser treatment of fungal nails would not benefit from the procedure. If we don't think the laser will work for your condition we will let you know so that you don't waste money on ineffective treatment.
- **Our GenesisPlus Laser has the best results in current studies.** There are many lasers available marketed for treating nail fungus - some work well to treat fungus and others don't work at all.
- **Better outcomes and better looking toenails.** There is evidence that patients see better results when they have three treatments rather than one. We include the all three laser sessions in our treatment protocol at no additional cost.
- **Lowest cost per session in the Seattle area.** Most patients have the best clearing of nails with three laser sessions, each separated by three months. Our price of \$590 includes all three sessions with no additional treatment costs. Our **GenesisPlus Laser** is almost twice the cost of some of the other lasers in the area. We purchased a high end laser to obtain the best results possible.
- **We treat all 10 toenails:** A British study that came out a few years ago showed that in people with some thick toenails due to fungus, fungus was often found even in the normal looking toenails. Based on this study we suggest treating all 10 nails, even if some of them look normal. This helps prevent reinfection. Treatment of all 10 nails is included in the \$590 cost.
- **We will provide realistic expectations of the success of all treatment options.** If we do not think laser is the best option for you we will let you know.

### **Treatment Schedule:**

1. **Initial visit:** This visit is for evaluation and to determine if you are a candidate for laser treatment. This visit is covered by most insurance carriers. If you are a good candidate for laser treatment you will be scheduled for your first treatment.
2. **Treatment #1:** At this visit the nails are thinned and the first laser treatment is performed. You are given detailed instruction on preventing reinfection
3. **Treatment #2 (3 months):** This visit is performed 3 months after treatment #1. The nail is thinned again and laser treatment is performed again.
4. **Treatment #3 (6 months):** This treatment is performed 6 months after treatment #1 Final laser treatment and review of preventing re-infection.

### **Preventing Reinfection**

Just like getting a strep throat or other infection, curing the infection will not prevent you from getting infected again. In fact, there seems to be a genetic predisposition to getting a fungal nail infection, so if you get it once you are prone to getting it again.

# Diagnosis of Nail Fungus (Onychomycosis)

Although many people think that all thick toenails are caused by fungus, there are actually many causes of thick toenails. Before we can adequately treat your thick or discolored nails, we must first have an accurate diagnosis.

## Causes of thick and discolored nails include:

- **Nail fungus**
- Trauma to the nail
- Shoe pressure on the nail
- Poor circulation
- Some disease conditions. For example, psoriatic arthritis can cause nail changes

## Diagnosis of Fungal Nails

After doing a history and examination to help determine the cause of your nail changes, we may get a lab test. This involves taking a small sample of the nail and having it examined in the lab under the microscope. The test is called a **Periodic Acid-Shiff (PAS)** test which involves a stain that turns any fungi red. This will also help identify the exact type of fungi present so that we can offer you the most effective treatment.

## Why is the lab test important?

If you are considering **laser treatment for your fungal nails** we don't want you paying for treatment if it will not be effective. Sometimes visual examination of the nail is adequate to diagnose toenail fungus, but many times it is not. This test will help us determine if your nail changes are due to fungus and whether the laser is likely to be effective for you.

## Lab Test Cost and Insurance Coverage

We use D-PATH Dermatopathology to perform our nail fungus tests. They will charge your insurance approximately \$165 for the testing. If D-PATH has a contractual relationship with your particular insurance plan, you will be responsible for co-insurance and deductible amounts as determined by your insurance carrier. In the event that they do not participate in your plan's network, they will accept what they determine as the reasonable and customary fee. You will be responsible for any co-insurance or deductible amounts determined by your insurance carrier.

D-PATH will accept as full payment 100% of Medicare's allowed amount for a test. If Medicare pays less than the full amount of the allowed amount for any reason (for example, the policy only pays 80%, the co-insurance or deductible has not yet been met) you may be responsible for the difference between the allowed amount and the amount paid by Medicare. If you would like to check insurance coverage ahead of time you can contact your insurance carrier and ask them if they cover the following billing codes:

- **88312** This code is for the stain and prep of the nail sample
- **88305** This code is for the microscopic examination of the sample

You will also want to find out how much of your deductible has already been met.

## No Insurance? Discount on Lab Services

If you are uninsured or the service is uncovered, D-Path will charge you a total of \$75 for the test. D-Path will bill you directly. You can contact D-Path at 866-957-0425.

Billing for the lab tests is a relationship between D-Path, you and your insurance carrier. If you have billing questions regarding the lab tests, contact D-Path Pathology Services directly at 866-957-0425

# Pre & Post Care for Onychomycosis Laser Treatments

## For best results please follow these instructions

### Before your treatment:

- Remove nail polish
- Trim your nails and clean them thoroughly with a **nail brush**
- Spray all shoes with **anti-fungal spray or disinfectant (Lysol)**. Alternatively, you can use a **Steri-Shoe Shoe Sanitizer**. (available at [www.footankle.com/prevent-nail-fungus.htm](http://www.footankle.com/prevent-nail-fungus.htm))
- Do not apply topical or antifungal cream or powder for 2 days prior to treatment
- **Do not apply topical tanners (self-tanner or professional tanner) for 4 weeks prior to treatment.**
- Bring clean socks with you to your treatment
- We will provide you with two prescriptions, please fill them prior to your appointment:
  - **Cicloporix Nail Lacquer** (to apply to the nails)
  - **Cicloporix Cream** (to apply to the skin of the feet)

### After your treatment, to help prevent re-infection:

- Wear clean socks/shoes after treatment
- Wash sheets, disinfect shower/bath and vacuum carpets day of treatment
- Apply **Cicloporix anti-fungal cream** to entire sole of foot, in between and on top of every toe twice a day for approximately 3 weeks (severe athlete's foot infections may require longer). We recommend ciclopirox cream, for which we will provide a prescription. Alternatively, you can use Lamisil (Terbinafine) cream, which is OTC.
- Apply **Ciclopirox Nail Lacquer** to toenails daily as instructed.
- Apply anti-fungal powder or spray to all shoes at least once a week. Alternatively you can use a **Steri-Shoe Shoe Sanitizer**.
- Do not walk barefoot in public places (pool, gym, etc.)
- Keep nails trimmed and cleaned (disinfect instruments after each use)
- Nail polish may be applied 24 hours after treatment. We recommend **Drs Remedy Nail Polish**, which includes ingredients that might be anti-fungal. **Do not use nail polish if you are using Ciclopirox Nail Lacquer.**
- Toenails will take 9-12 months to grow out. Severely infected nails may take longer
- Return for your follow-up treatments. Second treatment is performed 3 months after the first and the 3<sup>rd</sup> treatment is performed 6 months after the first treatment.
- People who get onychomycosis usually have inherited an immune system that does not fight this fungus very well. Thus, reinfection is not uncommon. Many patients return once per year for a preventative laser session.
- Notify clinic of any concerns
- Additional instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

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Foot and Ankle Center of Washington

[www.FootAnkle.com](http://www.FootAnkle.com) 206-344-3808

# ***Foot & Ankle Center of Washington***

## **Laser Treatment of Toenail Fungus**

### **Financial Information**

#### **Insurance Coverage**

Insurance companies consider laser therapy a cosmetic procedure and do not cover the service. Most insurance carriers will, however, cover your initial visit for evaluation and diagnosis of your nail problem.

#### **Cost**

Our philosophy is to keep the cost as low as possible and include all treatment in your initial fees so there are no surprises. The most effective outcomes are achieved with a total of three treatments of all 10 nails. All three treatments are included in the total cost of \$590. This does not include the initial evaluation visit. The evaluation visit can be billed to your insurance and normal co-pays will apply. If you do not have insurance coverage for this visit the cost is \$109.

#### **When is Payment Due?**

Payment in full is required before the treatment is administered.

If it is determined you have a fungal infection, you will schedule an appointment for the laser procedure and pay a \$150 down payment. This is refundable if you give a 48 hour cancellation notification. It will also not be lost if you reschedule within 24 hours of your appointment. The remaining \$440 is due at the time of the first laser appointment, before the treatment is administered. If you fail to show for the appointment the down payment is forfeited.

#### **Payment Options**

Cash, credit cards or debit cards are accepted. You may also use your medical IRA, Health Savings or Flexible Spending Account.

#### **Annual Prevention Session**

People who get onychomycosis usually have inherited an immune system that does not fight this fungus very well. Thus, reinfection is not uncommon. Many patients return once per year for a preventative laser session. The cost of this session is currently \$290 for one treatment session of all 10 toes. This is available only to patients who have undergone a full three treatment session with us in the previous 48 months.

#### **Reinfection**

If the nails become infected again and a full course of treatment is required, then standard three-session treatment charges apply.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

BY MY SIGNATURE BELOW, I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE READ AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THE CONTENTS OF THIS FINANCIAL FORM FOR LASER TREATMENT AND THAT I HAVE HAD ALL MY QUESTIONS ANSWERED TO MY SATISFACTION

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature-Patient or Guardian

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name/Relationship

# Preventing Fungus from Reinfesting Your Toenails

[www.footankle.com/prevent-nail-fungus.htm](http://www.footankle.com/prevent-nail-fungus.htm)

If we have treated you with a **Toenail Laser** or **oral medications** for fungal nails and you have seen improvement, you must be very diligent to prevent the nails from becoming reinfected. If your nails have become infected once with fungus, it is a sign that you are prone to this infection.

## Kill Fungus in Your Shoes to Prevent Re-infection

The first thing you must do is kill the fungus in your shoes. The warm moist environment of a shoe is the perfect place for fungus to grow. The most important method to prevent reinfection is to prevent fungus from growing in your shoes.

## Here is our complete 6-step plan to prevent another fungal infection:

**Step 1:** Do not wear the same shoes two days in a row. Let them dry out for a day in-between.

**Step 2:** Use an **Ultraviolet Shoe Sanitizer**. The **new SteriShoe® shoe sanitizer** kills the germs that reside inside your shoes with an ultraviolet light (UVC). In only one 45 minute treatment, you can destroy up to 99.9% of the microorganisms in shoes, including the bacteria and fungi that cause foot odor, toenail fungus, and athlete's foot. It is designed for people who have athlete's foot (tinea pedis), toenail fungus (onychomycosis) and chronic shoe odor.



**Step 3:** Use anti-fungal powder in your shoes. Our favorite is **Medline Remedy Antifungal Powder**. Put some in your shoes a couple times per week.



**Step 4:** For women who wish to use nail polish, we recommend nail polish with anti-fungal properties. The anti-fungal nail polish we recommend is **anti-fungal nail polish, Dr.'s Remedy Natural Nail Polish**. It contains Tea Tree Oil and Garlic Extract (found to have anti-fungal properties). Also, unlike most polishes, there are no caustic chemicals such as **Formaldehyde**, and **Toluene**.



**Step 5:** We provide our patients with a prescription for ciclopirox nail lacquer to be applied daily. You can also try **Tripod NailStat Anti-fungal Treatment**, although it is not as effective as the prescription medication.



**Step 6:** Wear socks that wick moisture from your feet. We recommend the **Juzo Silver Sole Sock**, which not only will wick moisture but contains silver fibers that can help kill fungus.



Don't live with nail fungus. For an evaluation of your nails and to discuss all of the available treatments including **laser therapy** and other options, **contact us today for an appointment**.