

What causes nail problems? (infections, thickening, nail lifting)

Nail problems have a wide variety of causes including allergic reactions, trauma, side effects of medications, infections (including bacteria, fungi and viruses), diminished circulation, smoking, and illnesses that effect many parts of the body, to name a few. If the nail is elevated, or lifted off the nail bed, a space develops under the nail where water and germs may accumulate. Once under the nail, these germs find a perfect environment to grow – a warm, moist area with a continuous blood supply bringing a constant food source, encouraging germs to multiply. Only a qualified physician is able to determine the cause of lifting, or if an infection is the result of a fungus, bacteria, or a combination of both.

How do I know what type of problem I have?

Only a physician is capable of diagnosing a nail condition. In order to determine your specific problem, a physician needs to take a thorough history as well as perform some laboratory tests.

How long does it take to get rid of a nail infection?

The length of time involved is determined by nail growth: No medication available can make a problem nail return to normal overnight. It takes approximately 3 to 6 months for fingernails and 6 to 12 months for toenails to grow out completely. In some individuals, with poor circulation or chronic medical conditions, the time required for re-growth may be much longer. Some lifestyle changes may be required such as not going barefoot, wearing foot coverings in public spaces such as gyms and community pools. Also the daily rotation of shoes and clean socks (preferably light colored) along with thorough disinfection of shower stall floor will help to eliminate sources of possible reinfection.

Why is it so difficult to get results?

The nails of our fingers and toes are tremendously effective barriers. This barrier makes it quite difficult for a superficial infection to invade the nail. Once an infection has set up residence, the same barrier that was so effective in protecting us against infection now works against us, making it difficult to treat the infection.

Do nail treatments offer guarantees?

Because a wide range of nail and skin disorders exists, no product for this purpose (prescription or OTC) can offer a guarantee. In fact, due to the unique make-up and diversity of human beings, no legitimate medicinal product can ever promise a 100% guarantee to resolve every problem for every individual. Several variables may impact the healing of an infected nail, including trauma, chronic illnesses, other types of infection, psoriasis, environmental factors, etc.