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## Medical News

Try these tips to avoid nail fungus while working in the garden

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With so much focus on healthy food, gardening and farm-to-table food delivery, it's no wonder that gardening is booming. More and more people are heading outdoors, turning parts of their yards into gardens or farming on their land. It is important to remember that while gardening is a healthy and fun activity, certain perils exist.

Nail fungus or onychomycosis is a common condition caused by the infection of the nail by organisms called dermatophytes that are found in our environment and soil. Dermatophytes invade the nail, causing yellowing, thickening and crumbling. Diseased nails can provide an entryway for other types of infections to enter the body. Your chances of getting onychomycosis go up with advancing age and genetics play a role too. If you have poor circulation, diabetes or a condition that suppresses your immune system, you are also at higher risk. While prevention is not always possible, here are some things you can do to reduce your risk of getting infected:

Avoid walking barefoot outdoors and in public places such as showers, pools, gyms and the beach.

Use antifungal foot powder in your shoes and an antifungal foot spray if you think you may be prone to infection.

Keep your nails trimmed straight across. Do not trim them in a curved manner where the sides are shorter than the middle.

Protect your hands while gardening or working with soil by using clean gloves. You may wish to use an antifungal powder and spray here as well. Just be sure to wash your hands well afterwards.

If you notice a change in the appearance of your nails, see your dermatologist.

Fingernails take 6 months and toenails take 9-12 months to grow from start to finish. Topical medications have the best results when used until the nail looks normal. Oral medications incorporate themselves into the growing nail and grow out with the nail so they do not have to be given for as long a period of time as topical medications.

Please enjoy your gardening and the fruits of your labor. Be mindful of your nails so you will be able to keep them healthy for a long lifetime!

The health information in this article is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment for any medical conditions. You should promptly seek professional medical care if you have any concern about your health.

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