

The Kansas Foot Center

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LASER TREATMENT

FOR FUNGAL NAILS





Fungal toenails are an unfortunate source of embarrassment, self-consciousness, and frustration for millions of Americans. While they don't pose much medical risk for otherwise healthy individuals, they can significantly hamper your self-confidence and rob you of your desire to wear open-toed shoes or enjoy a sunny summer day with family and friends.

For decades, the best treatments available for fungal toenails were time-consuming, inefficient, and often ineffective. But no longer! Thanks to the development of laser technology, there is now a much easier, faster, safer, and more effective option on the table.





Background: Causes and Symptoms Of Fungal Toenails

Fungal nails, known medically as onychomycosis, are caused by a group of fungi known as dermatophytes. There are about 40 different species, but they all have one thing in common: they feast on keratin, a protein that's plentiful in both skin and nails. In addition to fungal nails, dermatophytes are also responsible for skin infections such as athlete's foot and jock itch.

The fungi prefer warm, moist environments (think locker rooms, showers, and shoes). They can spread through contact with infected surfaces or objects, and they can get under your nails through a tiny separation between your nail and your toe, or even through microscopic cuts in the skin.

Not every case of fungal nails will produce exactly the same symptoms, but the nail often appears:

- Excessively thick
- Dull and grayish or yellowish with no shine
- Brittle
- Ragged and warped, with a distorted appearance
- Crumbly

Traditional Methods Just Don't Cut It Anymore

For a long time, the standard treatment practice for fungal toenails required a strict regimen of oral antifungal pills, taken over the course of 6 to 12 weeks. While many doctors still use this strategy, it comes with two significant drawbacks:



- **Side effects.** Not everyone tolerates antifungal pills well, and side effects can range from the unpleasant (such as skin rashes) to the genuinely dangerous (including liver damage). Regular blood tests are often performed to ensure safety, and the pills are not recommended for anyone with heart or liver disease.



- **Limited effectiveness.** Despite all the hassle, the cure rates for traditional antifungal pills just aren't that high, especially for seniors over the age of 65. This is due to slow rates of circulation to the toes, which limits the speed and effectiveness of oral treatments.

Topical antifungal creams, such as those commonly used to treat athlete's foot, are in most cases useless against fungal toenails, because they are unable to penetrate through the nail and access the fungi living underneath. Home remedies, such as the use of vinegar, mouthwash, or tea tree oil are similarly ineffective.

One other extreme alternative is to remove the nail entirely and apply topical antifungals directly to the fungi, but cure rates using this tactic aren't much higher than oral antifungals.

Due to the essentially limitless supply of keratin and natural protection provided by the toenail, toenail fungus won't go away on its own. Clearly, an alternative treatment option was desperately needed. Fortunately, that alternative has now arrived in the form of laser therapy.

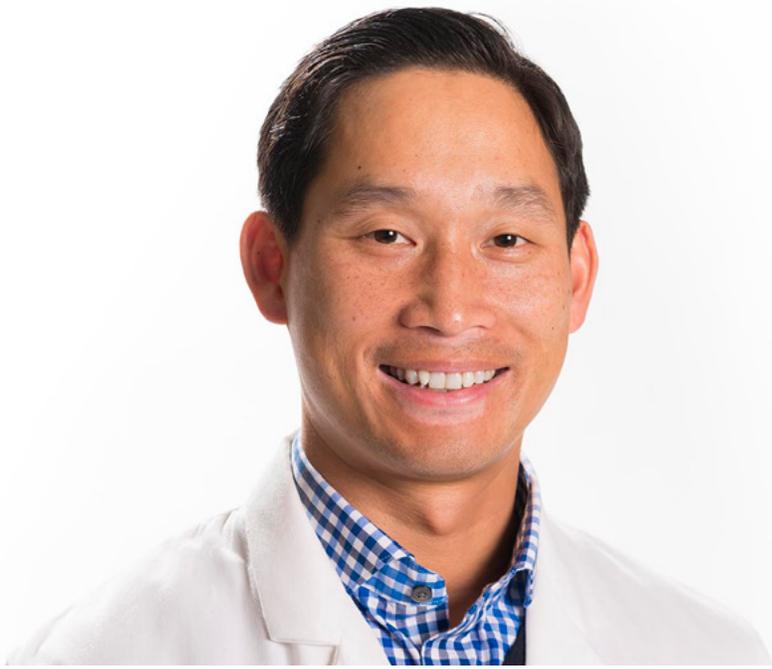
How Fungal Nail Lasers Work

Rather than oral or topical antifungals or other medicine-based approaches, laser therapy uses highly focused beams of light set to extremely specific wavelengths. The one we use at the Kansas Foot Center uses 870nm and 930nm beams.

These wavelengths have been specifically selected because they can target the dermatophytes causing the infection with pinpoint accuracy. The laser beams pass straight through the toenail and attack the infection underneath, all without causing any pain, discomfort, or damage to your nails, skin, or other tissues. Because they use light rather than heat, there is virtually no risk involved.

Fungal nail lasers are a relatively recent addition to the podiatrists' toolkit against fungal nails, with widespread adoption only beginning within the last decade or so. However, the technology has been in development for much longer, and has been rigorously tested and proven safe by the FDA.





The Appointment and Treatment Course

Laser treatment sessions are quite brief, taking only about 15 to 20 minutes of your time per affected toe on average. There should be no pain or discomfort, and no downtime, either. You walk in, the treatment procedure is performed, and you walk out and can return immediately to your regular activities. At most, there may be a very mild warming sensation.

Unlike oral medications, there are no known side effects—the treatment is FDA approved and completely safe.

The number of sessions required for effective treatment may vary. A typical treatment course might include about 3 sessions on average, though some people may require more, and others may start to see good results already after the first treatment.

Remember that, while there is typically significant clearing of the nail after a few treatments as redness and inflammation of surrounding tissues subsides, the laser won't undo any existing damage to the nail. While the fungus may be eradicated, it will still take some time for the new, healthy nail to grow out and replace the dull, damaged portion. Depending on how fast your nails grow, this process may take several months to a year.

Follow Up Home Care

Toenail fungus is a hardy infection. Once you have been cleared of the dermatophytes, it will be important to practice good foot and nail hygiene and take steps to prevent a re-infection. This includes strategies such as:



Washing your feet every day



Always wearing sandals or shower shoes in public facilities, such as gyms, locker rooms, pool decks, & showers



Changing socks at least every day, or more frequently if you tend to sweat a lot



Never sharing socks or towels with other people



Owning at least two pairs of everyday shoes so you can let each pair dry out a full 24 hours between uses



Applying antifungal sprays or powders to feet and/or shoes as necessary

In Summary: Why Choose Laser?

To recap, laser treatment offers many significant advantages over traditional oral antifungal treatments, with few if any medical disadvantages.

- **It's faster.** Treatment consists of a small number of office sessions lasting 30 minutes at most, rather than 6 to 12 weeks of taking pills.
- **It's safer.** Laser treatment has no known side effects, whereas oral antifungals can cause skin rashes, liver damage, and other undesirable problems.
- **It's more effective.** Old-school treatments had an overall failure rate of 50% or more, with success rates that declined steadily with age. By contrast, laser treatment is successful around 90% of the time, with better overall results in the short, medium, and long term on average. If you suffer from heart or liver problems, laser treatment may be the only effective option available to you.

In terms of cost, laser treatment may or may not be covered by your health insurance provider, so it will be important to check this beforehand. Most providers offer flexible payment plans and options to help patients afford the cost of treatment if insurance provides no or only partial coverage.



Step In And Walk Out Happy

For more information about the benefits of laser treatment for fungal nails, or to schedule your initial consultation for treatment, contact the Kansas Foot Center in Wichita today!

(866) 222-5177

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