

MORE THAN JUST SKIN

Dermatologists don't just treat skin conditions, they also cover hair and nails. Nails are specialised protective plates of hard keratin that develop from the skin overlying the small bones at the ends of the fingers and toes.

Nails grow continuously. Fingernails take six months to grow from the cuticle to the tip at a rate of 3mm per month. Toenails grow more slowly at 1mm per month.

Professor Rodney Sinclair, dermatologist with the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) says: "Age, medications and diseases may influence the growth rate of nails. Changes in the nail may be caused by an injury, fungal disease or other skin conditions such as psoriasis or eczema. Nails can be infected by fungi. The nail plate becomes thickened, crumbly and discoloured. If there is no history of these conditions and a clinical examination is not conclusive, then a fungal culture from the affected nail will need to be taken."

Oral antifungal medication may be required to treat the infection. Affected people often have frequent recurrent infections. Observing the following simple precautions will reduce the frequency of recurrent infections:

- Wear thongs/sandals in communal showers
- Dry feet thoroughly
- Go barefoot whenever practical, except in communal areas such as gyms or around swimming pools
- Wear moisture absorbent socks
- Keep nails clipped
- Change and air shoes regularly.

Prof Sinclair says: "Discuss any nail problems you have with your general practitioner. A referral to a dermatologist may be needed."

ENDS

Links to further information

[A-Z of Skin](#)

[Find a local dermatologist](#)

For further information on the ACD, visit www.dermcoll.edu.au, or see our updates on [Facebook](#) or Twitter at [@DermatologyACD](#) #dermcoll or [LinkedIn](#)

About the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD):

The ACD is the peak medical college accredited by the Australian Medical Council for the training and professional development of medical practitioners in the specialty of dermatology. They provide



THE AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE
OF DERMATOLOGISTS

authoritative information about dermatology to Government, the media, other health professionals and the general public.

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