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## **Fungal infection**

A nail technician should work on healthy feet only. Therefore, if there is any sign of infection the client must be advised to seek medical advice. This is because the client has caught the infection from an unknown source and, by carrying out a pedicure, you will be continuing that cycle by risking cross-contamination.

"Finding white spots on your toenails is a common experience," says Cindy Johnson, Jessica Nails expert and chiropodist. "The discoloration, which may be white or slightly yellowish, often appears at the cuticle area. These white spots slowly move outward as the nail grows. White spots on toenails may appear as very small semi-circular discolorations and these often indicate injury to the matrix of the nail, which is the part under the nail where new nail cells are produced.

"The most common factor that can cause white spots on the nails, however, is fungi, which can come from the air and soil. Sweaty feet also provide a good medium for fungal infection. If you do find there is a fungal infection, I would caution against carrying out a pedicure. Gently advise your client to see a GP or chiropodist. As with every customer, make detailed notes on client cards, so with the next treatment you can monitor progress."

## Causal factors & preventative measures

"A warm, dark and humid environment is one in which bacteria and fungi can live and multiply," Cindy continues. "Keeping feet as dry as possible is important for preventing infections, such as athlete's foot. Advise your clients to wear socks that are made of a breathable material and ensure that they fit correctly. Use talcum powder inside socks and running shoes to prevent any dampness from occurring. If a client suffers with athlete's foot, suggest using a fungicide twice a day for at least three months. The fungus can linger even after the symptoms are gone, so be sure to continue the treatment."

One of the most common fungal infections found in the nail is onychomycosis. Symptoms may include white or yellow nail discolouration, thickening of the nail and separation of the nail from the nail bed.

"Often untreated, onychomycosis spreads to other toenails and can cause loss of the entire nail," says Kayleigh Parr, Pure Nails ambassador. "A fungal nail will usually present itself as thickened and discoloured, usually a yellowish-brown colour, but can also be green, white or black. The nail will become brittle and can often flake or peel.

"There are several over the counter treatments available for fungal nail infections, but this often only works in milder and newer cases. To fully treat the infection and be sure it has cleared up, a doctor can prescribe medication while keeping a close eye on the progress. It can take several weeks to months for the infection to clear as it grows out, depending on the severity."

While a nail technician should not carry out a pedicure on a client that displays symptoms of a fungal infection, it is possible to recommend treatment products as well as details of a local podiatrist or chiropodist that can recommend further treatment. It is also important to educate the client on how to prevent getting a fungal infection in the future.

"Fungal infections in the nail and skin require antifungal treatments – here, both chemical and natural remedies are worth considering," advises Dina Gohil. "In some cases it is even worth considering a combination of both remedies, as fungal infections can be extremely hard to clear. Athlete's foot can be cleared quite quickly with over the counter products, but ultimately education on how to prevent it from reoccurring is key."



