

# Ask The Experts

## Putting Your Best Foot Forward: Tips For Good Foot Health

by Dr. John Mozena, DPM, FACFAS (NAPSA)—When it comes to personal health and hygiene, it's always a good idea to put your best foot forward. Foot health is especially important among runners, and in fact all exercise enthusiasts, since the feet are the



**Mozena**

foundation for most types of physical activity. Proper foot care is essential in preventing serious problems and ensuring that conditions such as toenail fungus, which affects over 13 percent of the U.S. population, are treated at an early stage.

### **Q. What common foot problems can slow down runners and athletes in general?**

A. Shin splints, cramps, blisters and athlete's foot are all familiar problems that can affect active people, but a common infection that we don't hear much about is toenail fungus. Sports enthusiasts are at an increased risk for fungus because the infection develops in a warm, moist environment. Wearing sweaty athletic shoes and socks is a key risk factor.

### **Q. What are the signs of toenail fungus?**

A. The fungus actually infects the skin and then goes into the toenail, causing it to thicken. The toenail can eventually loosen and detach. Some common signs of a fungal infection include noticeable changes in color or a thickening of the toenails. They can also become



**People who are physically active should pay extra attention to the health of their feet and toenails.**

brittle and crumble.

### **Q. How is toenail fungus treated?**

A. People should consult with their doctor to determine the best course of treatment; especially those at risk for fungus such as individuals who exercise frequently, type 2 diabetics and the elderly. For mild to moderate cases, I prescribe Penlac® Nail Lacquer (ciclopirox). This medication is indicated in immunocompetent patients with mild to moderate onychomycosis without lunula involvement, due to *Trichophyton rubrum*. It is the first and only topical prescription therapy approved by the FDA to treat toenail fungus. Applied daily with a brush, it safely targets the site of infection without the risk of systemic side effects or drug interactions.

There is no quick remedy for treating toenail fungus, so patience is important. Toenails need time to grow out as they heal. No matter what treatment you use, results will not be immediate. It takes a toenail at least a year to grow out.

### **Q. How can toenail fungus be prevented?**

A. Change sweaty running shoes and socks immediately after exercising and apply a foot powder. I also recommend drying the feet and between the toes thoroughly after a shower, wearing sandals in public showers, and examining the feet regularly for any sign of discoloration, detachment or crumbling of the nail.

### **Q. What important safety information should I know about Penlac®?**

A. Penlac®, part of a comprehensive management program, includes regular removal of the unattached, infected nail by a health care professional, especially for patients with diabetes. Clinical data regarding systemic anti-fungals and Penlac® is not available to support concomitant use. Penlac® is well tolerated; treatment-related side effects were periungual erythema (5 percent) and nail disorder (2 percent).

To learn more about foot health, speak with a podiatrist or visit [www.penlac.com](http://www.penlac.com).

*John Mozena, DPM, FACFAS, is one of the nation's prominent podiatrists and an expert on foot health and running-related foot problems.*