

# FUNGUS INFECTIONS –DERMATOPHYTOSIS

You have a skin condition which is caused by a fungus. It can involve the skin, nails, and sometimes the hair. The doctor will tell you which parts of your body are involved. This fungus grows on human skin. Many people have this condition. It is low-grade contagious. You usually do not catch it directly from one person to another.

Usually you have a weakness in your skin or nails that causes the fungus, which is in our environment, to set into your skin and grow there. It is sometimes common to catch fungus infections from animals, especially cats and dogs. Some people call this fungus athlete's foot or ringworm. It is really not a worm but it sometimes grows in red circles in the skin and thus the name ringworm.

The fungus of the skin also is called **dermatophytosis**. This condition responds well to topical antifungal creams and special pills which kill the fungus.

These pills are usually very safe to take. They sometimes are taken for many months to years. The pills sometimes give people a slight headache when they first start taking them. There is no harm in this. If the pills cause a headache, it is necessary for us to switch the brand. If the doctor has samples of the pills, he will give you some to try before you fill the prescription. If they agree with you, then fill the prescription and continue taking the medication as directed. If the pills give you a headache, call the doctor and he will order a different brand.

Some fungus pills require that you obtain an occasional laboratory test to be sure that your liver is properly metabolizing the medication.

If at any time you do not feel well with cold, flu, or any other illness, please stop taking the fungal pills until you are feeling better. Always call the office and let us know if you have discontinued use of the pills because of any unusual illness which lasts more than a few days.

When treating fungal infections of the fingernails and the toenails it is necessary to keep up the treatment for six to twelve months. It takes six months at least to grow a new nail. You will be seen by the doctor at least once a month during this treatment. As your skin condition and nails begin to improve, the pills and cream will be tapered down.

Some people require maintenance therapy over many months and years in order to keep the fungus from recurring. In some people, this only requires that you continue using the cream a few times a week. Some people have to take a few pills a month in order to keep the fungus from coming back. Some people only have to restart the pills at the first sign of return of the fungus.

If the fungus involves your nails, the doctor may inject a medication into the skin near the nail of several occasions or on a regular basis for several months in order to cause the nails to grow out healthier and faster, thus shedding the fungus and the new nail grows.