

**Laser is an effective treatment for nail fungus infections, without the side effects which can result from drug therapy. It also treats warts.**

The Neo Laser system treats skin conditions with laser and is especially useful in treating *onychomycosis*, or fungal infections in the nail bed.

The benefits of this treatment are as follows:

- Surgery (removal of the nail) is avoided
- The patient can resume normal activity
- Oral drug therapy is avoided. This is expensive and has the potential for side effects. Many patients may not be good candidates and, those who are, should undergo liver-function tests whilst on the course
- Laser treatment penetrates under the nail, without having to remove the nail
- Repeated treatments are possible, without a build-up of side effects (especially beneficial to patients who are susceptible to toenail infections, such as diabetics)
- Treatment is almost pain-free and does not involve local or general anaesthetics.

### **What causes fungal nail infections?**

The most common fungi are members of the Tricophyton family of fungi, nicknamed “trike” by doctors, or yeasts like Candida (one of which also causes the common infection “thrush”).

Fungi are all around us - in air, dust and soil. It is thought that warm, moist environments like shower rooms, gym floors, saunas and swimming pools can also harbour fungi.

Infection usually starts on the edge of the nail but then penetrates beneath the nail, where it is difficult to reach using creams.

### **What are the symptoms?**

While not life-threatening, infected nails are unsightly:

- Dull, brittle, thick nails, sometimes separated from the nail bed
- Streaked or patchy yellow or white nails
- An unpleasant smell can result from infected nails.

If fingernails are affected, the person can suffer severe anxiety because the nails are so unsightly.

### **How does Neo Laser work?**

Using a custom-designed handset, the clinician focuses lasers on the infected nail. The nail plate is heated up and the fungi killed off. The patient feels only a sensation of warmth.

Infections should improve after each treatment. Because fungal infections are so tenacious, repeat treatments are prescribed. Typically, two or three treatments at six week intervals will result in healthy nail growth. Most clinicians will check progress using before and after photographs. Side effects are rare, but skin redness may occur. If the skin is broken, antibiotic cream might be prescribed - however these reactions are rare.

### **Can fungus come back?**

Because fungi are all around us, even hot washing of infected shoes and socks will not guarantee that these do not cause re-infection. To prevent re-infection, patients should wear new shoes and socks, or soak old footwear in a fungicidal solution recommended by your podiatrist.