

## FACT SHEET THIRTEEN: Thickened Toe Nails

13.

**I have very thick toenails – particularly my second toe, and am concerned it has also become infected – what can I do?**

Profoot's Foot Doctor, William Hutchings of the Diss Podiatry and Chiropody Clinic, Norfolk says:

Thickened toenails are common and about 5% of the population have infected toenails. There are several causes to this:

- **Physical damage** can cause toenails to become thick until the damaged area grows out. This is common in young men, particularly football players. Older people are also more susceptible, due to slower circulation and damage throughout the years. Their nails grow more slowly thus the damaged nail takes longer to grow out.
- **Fungal infection** also causes the nails to become thick. The most common cause is the same fungus that causes athlete's foot, however occasionally other types of fungus, such as yeasts can also be responsible.
- **Psoriasis** is a skin condition that can also make nails thick, with tiny pits on the surface.

### **What can be done?**

- If it causes pain or if you have difficulty wearing shoes it may be wise to visit a chiropodist and have the nail reduced in thickness painlessly with an electric drill.
- Thickened toenails can be painful, especially if the thickened nail rubs against the top of the shoe. Try protecting toes with Profoot's Toe Protector – it surrounds, cushions and thus protects sore toes from external pressure. The medical grade mineral oil enriched gel will also soften and moisturise, helping to reduce hard skin build up.
- Care for your feet, give them plenty of air as warmth and sweat encourage fungi
- Choose shoes that give your toes plenty of room
- Dry your feet very thoroughly after washing, using a tissue to dab underneath the end of the nail – making it as dry as possible
- It is tempting to use nail varnish to disguise the nail – nails need to breathe, so if you have to use nail varnish, use it for a short period only, removing as soon as possible
- If you have an outbreak of athlete's foot, treat it quickly and effectively so it doesn't spread to the nails