



Will the laser permanently or fully cure my nail fungus?

Nail fungus treatment can be performed using a variety of techniques that include: lacquer, liquid, oral medication, or lasers. Laser nail fungus treatment involves often expensive technology, and it can be unpredictable and time consuming. Most of the lack of predictability with laser nail fungus removal is related to the patient's immune system, location, lifestyle, anatomy, and the fungus itself. Is the patient immunologically suppressed or of advanced age? Is there one nail or multiple nails involved on the fingers or toes? Does the patient keep the area dry and how long has the infection been going on? What is the quality of the patient's skin and are they diabetic or actively smoke? Most patients presenting for laser nail fungus treatment have tried other treatment regimens. Most discontent with laser nail fungus treatment relates to the cost, discomfort, and time associated with laser treatments. Different lasers may be required based on the quality of the patient's nail or the patient's skin type. Laser nail fungus treatment does not cure the disease, it only improve symptoms with multiple treatments. The vast majority of laser nail fungus takes 3-5 treatments to improve nail by 70% with consistent maintenance treatments. The laser focuses on thermal disruption of the nail bed first and then fungal decrease treated multiple times. Many patients do not have the patience or finances to fully complete laser nail fungal treatment and then maintain its results.

How effective are over-the-counter or prescribed oral medications?

No over the counter remedies are very effective at treating chronic nail fungus. Many patients attempt to treat unwanted nail fungus on their own, but very few patients see any noticeable long term improvement without more aggressive regimens. Some patients use tea tree oil with very little to no affect and many develop an allergic reaction over time. Almost no over-the-counter treatment can provide effective dosing without a physician prescription or supervision. Patients are best served to save their time & money for professional consultation and treatment. Most prescribed topical products are inhibitory but rarely improve clinical symptoms by more than 50%. Medically prescribed oral medications are very effective over time, but are associated with significant risk of toxicity. Your physician or health care professional can help you develop a legitimate treatment that is right for you.

What do you think about prescribed topical liquids and lacquer?

Topically prescribed products are often associated with predictable results. These products are applied to the nail daily to decrease or treat nail fungus. Thymol liquid must be compounded at a special pharmacy and has a foul odor, but it will significantly improve symptoms over time. Penlec® (ciclopirox) lacquer requires prescription and prevents patients from paining nails. Most patients report partial success with these topical treatments over time, and they can be used in combination with oral tablets or laser nail fungus treatments. Dr. Lowe is committed to a clinically effective laser nail fungus treatment, and medical management of this disease should be supervised by your dermatologist or primary care physicians when indicated. Laser treatment is usually indicated when patients have fully explored and are dissatisfied with other failed conventional treatments.

What is the best laser for nail fungus treatment?

There are a number of lasers that are popular in nail fungus treatment. The most popular devices use a combination of a Q-switch and regular ND-Yag laser at wavelength of 1064. The laser first disrupts the surface of the nail and then uses target intense light to neutralize or treat chronic fungus growth along the nail margin. It is best if the nails are closely trimmed or filled prior to treatment to allow for more laser penetration. The Harmony platform allow for both ND-Yag lasers to be utilized on one day with multiple passes. Laser nail fungus treatment is associated with limited discomfort and recovery. Some patients require topical anesthetic before or after treatment. No laser nail fungus treatment is effective with only one treatment. The cost of laser nail fungus treatment usually depends on the location, anatomy, fungus, and device utilized. The newer and more effective laser devices cost more, but are usually more effective with this very challenging disease.

Are there substantial risks related to laser nail fungus treatment?

All laser procedures are associated with a certain amount of risk. The risks are often associated with a patient's skin color or consistency. Darker skin types are at a higher risk of scarring and hypopigmentation (white spots). All laser procedures must be adjusted and formulated appropriately for skin type, location, and clinical situation. The risk of laser nail fungus treatment includes: poor aesthetic results, swelling, blisters, burns, isolated pain, and scarring. The greater the number of passes with the laser the higher the risks. However, the more aggressive the laser treatment, the better the results in most cases. Laser fungus treatment is always a balance between "pain & gain." Your board certified plastic surgeon or dermatologist can assist you with choosing the treatment that is right for you.

Is laser nail fungus painful or time consuming?

Laser nail fungus treatment is usually performed in the office with topical numbing cream. A very limited number of patients request sedation with a medication by mouth prescribed in advance. The skin surface is treated quickly with small burst of intense laser light in a circular motion requiring multiple passes. The laser is then modified and the nail bed is retreated with multiple passes. Even when treating multiple digits or toes the treatment only requires several minutes per nail. A complete treatment usually requires about 15 minutes of office time particularly if the patient is well prepared. Icing the area before and after each pass may be required in some cases. Most patients find the treatment to be uncomfortable but tolerable when performed quickly and spaced appropriately. Patient should expect to experience isolated pain and redness with occasional crusting skin for 3-5 days in most cases, but results can vary with the severity of disease or patient skin type. Most patients undergo 4-8 treatments at 3-6 month intervals and then twice a year maintenance to maximize the clinical results.

How much improvement can I expect with each laser treatment?

Laser nail fungus treatment requires multiple sessions over a year to experience noticeable results. It is one of the best options for chronic nail fungus because it can usually be worked into a person's busy schedule and it delivers real results with limited risks. It is not a treatment that delivers clinical results right away or permanently. Most patients should aggressively trim and file the diseased nail prior and after treatment. This allows the laser to more effectively penetrate the margins of the nail where the fungus is hiding. Patients are encouraged to continue their physician prescribed medications (topical or by mouth) to optimize results. The treated nail will be red and tender the first several days and should be left open to air and dry as much as possible after treatments. Even with this advanced treatment, patients should not expect improvement for 4-6 months until the nail completes its growth cycle. After treatment, the healthier new nail grows in slowly at the base and the old diseased nail moves distally and is trimmed. Laser treatment should be continued at least 4-5 five cycles for any measurable success. Laser nail fungus treatment will in no way provide instant results regardless of what anyone may claim or advertise. Nevertheless, most patients suffering from chronic nail fungus infections are satisfied after a year and continue treatments.

How much does laser nail fungus treatment cost?

Laser nail fungus treatment involves complex laser technology. There are a variety of laser manufacturers that sell these devices. The cost to purchase a fully functional current laser device is about 80-100K. Dr. Lowe usually leases the lasers in his practice. This ensures in most cases that the lasers are properly maintained, a laser technician is on site, and that patients have access to current technology. In most cases, approximately half the laser fee goes to pay for the laser lease and the other is profit. The cost of laser nail fungus treatment is determined by time, location, and complexity of treatment. Patient in our practice can pay per toe or per entire extremity at a set price. The practice will be able to provide you with the cost of laser treatment after your professional consultation.

When do you offer laser nail fungus treatments?

All patients considering laser treatment are required to see Dr. Lowe in consultation prior to the laser treatment. Some patient may not schedule a laser treatment for several weeks after consultation depending on their schedule or time of year. Our practice provides laser procedures at set time points throughout the calendar month. We usually perform laser treatments on Wednesday mornings every 2-3 weeks depending on demand. We will often open extra laser treatment days as demand increases. Patients may check with

our office for the laser dates that are currently available. Some patients with dark skin or severe disease that is more resistant to treatment will require special laser arrangements.

Can laser nail fungus treatment be combined with other nonsurgical procedures?

Laser nail fungus treatment is routinely combined with other cosmetic treatments. Additional laser treatments such as Intense Pulse Light (IPL) or resurfacing can be used to address aging skin. Other lasers such as the V-Beam (PDL) can often be added to limited areas without substantial additional risk. Most laser nail fungus treatments are quite quick; and, therefore allow for other treatment options. Some patients undergo BOTOX application on the same day as laser treatment when scheduled in advance. However, more lengthy cosmetic procedures such as injectable fillers (i.e. Juvederm) usually cannot be performed on the same day due to time limitations or safety concerns. Laser treatments must be performed efficiently and properly on laser days to ensure the most cost effective and safe patient care. Patients who are interested in doing more than one cosmetic treatment on the day of laser are encouraged to check with our office in advance.

What is the downtime related to laser nail fungus treatment?

In our practice, laser nail fungus treatment is performed by the physician or his assistant. Dr. Lowe is committed to providing patients with an effective and safe laser treatment. The downtime associated with the typical treatment is 2-4 days or longer. The patients usually return to work the same day as long as they are able to keep the area clean and protected for 48 hours. Most patients are quite comfortable immediately after treatment. Every patient has different skin and different expectations or definitions about down-time. Patients should undergo laser treatments at least 2 weeks prior to a major event such as a wedding, anniversary, or competitive athletic event. A patient may elect to have a more or less aggressive treatment based on their clinical or social situation. Dr. Lowe and our staff can provide you with further information about downtime and recovery during your laser consultation.

Is laser nail fungus treatment right for me?

In most cases, laser treatment is not something that a patient needs; it is something a patient wants. There is a financial and personal cost for patients who desire treatment. There are a variety of options to treat chronic nail infections. These include topical and oral medications, surgery, and laser treatments to name just a few. Laser treatments provide modest results at a limited cost over time. The treatment regimen is not associated with undue risk in most cases. Most patients undergo ongoing treatments and maintenance in our practice which is a testament to its effectiveness. No cosmetic procedure is without risk or cost, but laser nail fungus treatment is very popular right now. It is exciting for patients who have failed all other treatments to finally see real results and a healthier nail. Patients should carefully weigh the pros and cons of laser before scheduling the procedure. Each patient is unique, a consultation with a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon or Dermatologist can help you determine what options best suite your situation and pocket book. Laser nail fungus treatment is often the right thing for the right person. For further information check out our website or other helpful links at www.drjlowe.com

What are Dr. Lowe's take home points?

1. Laser nail fungus treatment is not a cure. It is an improvement.
2. Laser treatments are not covered by health insurance in our practice.
3. Understand risks (poor results, crusting, swelling, burning, and pain).
4. Most patients tolerate treatment with topical numbing cream.
5. The success depends on the severity of the disease and multiple applications over time.
6. Multiple passes performed with two different laser devices on the same day are required.
7. In most cases, treatments are spaced over a 4-6 month period with twice yearly maintenance.
8. Treatments can be adjusted to increase or decrease recovery and results.
9. The diseased nail should be aggressive trimmed or filled before and after treatments.
10. The quality of the laser and safety matters when undergoing any laser treatment.