

## Little piggies, big problems

If your toenails are less than beautiful, there's a new treatment on the block

Words **Siski Green**

### **I**f your toes are better off hidden inside your socks

As the nails have become yellow or thick, it's not just an aesthetic problem. It's most likely to be onychomycosis, otherwise known as nail fungus. More than one in ten of us will have it – 25% over 60 – and it's extremely difficult to treat.

Ignoring things can lead to some real problems – the brittle nail can fall off or disintegrate, causing the nail bed and surrounding skin to become inflamed. That's dangerous for diabetics as broken skin on the feet is much slower to heal.

Traditional treatments can be slow and not very effective. Over-the-counter creams and tea-tree oil are cheap and may do the trick if you catch the problem early. But they take months to work, may cause side effects, and many are not recommended for diabetics.

Oral treatments such as Lamasil and Sporanox (terbinafine and itraconazole)

two 12-minute treatments. The light is in fact a low-level laser set at a wavelength that kills off the fungal infection.

Two early studies found it to be very effective. It's painless and costs start at £500 for two treatments for both feet. Martine Abrahams, Director of The London Nail Laser Clinic says: 'Lunula is safe to use on patients with diabetes and could temporarily help to relieve some of the symptoms of diabetes in the foot, due to the increase in blood flow to the area after treatment.'

Other types of laser treatment approved for use within the UK are offered at various clinics round the country. These use a different wavelength and warm the nail slightly. Look out for clinics offering Cutera, Fotona or PinPointe systems.

**PinPointe** was found to be 80% effective in one preliminary US study and most patients grew a normal nail six to

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## Laser treatment

The good news is that laser treatment, which originated in the US, is evolving fast, and is safe and pretty effective. The bad news is that it's expensive and not available on the NHS, though most clinics offer interest-free payment plans.

**Lunula** is the newest laser treatment. It's a 'cold laser': a 'light' is shone on the nail in

get a single treatment for one nail for around £75. Several sessions may be needed.

### MORE INFORMATION

#### Lunula

**thelondonnailaserclinic.co.uk**, 0800 195 6406: clinics in London, Radlett, Bromsgrove.

#### PinPointe lasernailclinics.

**co.uk**, 0845 224 2576: clinics in Manchester, Nottingham and Sheffield. ♦

*To make sure you get the appropriate treatment, consult your chiropodist first: they should be able to recommend a local clinic*