



“My nails are turning green!”

Benjamin Barankin, MD, FRCPC

A 45-year-old female cook presents with a two month history of green nails. She also has erythema and edema of the proximal nail fold and an absent cuticle.

1. What is the most likely diagnosis?

- Onychomycosis
- Pseudomonas nail infection
- Onychoschizia
- Onychomadesis
- Nail infection by mould

2. What kind of infection is this?

- Gram-positive cocci
- Gram-negative cocci
- Mould
- Gram-negative rod
- Gram-positive rod

3. How could you manage these lesions?

- Vinegar soaks
- Silver sulfadiazine
- Double oral antibiotic therapy
- Topical ciprofloxacin drops
- All of the above

Diagnosis: Pseudomonas nail infection. Pseudomonas is a gram-negative rod which often produces the blue-green pigment pyocyanin and has a characteristic sweet odour. Pseudomonas infections are common in hospitalized patients and can cause pneumonia, urinary tract infections and bacteremia and can even be life threatening. It is an opportunistic pathogen that typically does not cause problems in healthy persons. Immunocompromised



Figure 1. Green markings on a fingernail.

patients, especially those with diabetes, are at increased risk of infection. As in this case, the absence of the cuticle, resulting in paronychia, has allowed entry of this bacteria.

Pseudomonas flourishes on moist skin and grows poorly on dry skin. It is also a common cause of hot tub or swimming pool folliculitis and can secondarily infect ulcers, burns and tinea pedis. Green nail syndrome is common in those whose hands are frequently in water. Treatment includes vinegar soaks, silver sulfadiazine and double antibiotic therapy. **Dx**

Answers: 1-b; 2-d; 3-e

Dr. Barankin is a Dermatologist practicing in Toronto, Ontario.