

Toenail - Ingrown

Definition

- The corner of the toenail grows into the skin around it
- Almost always involves the big toe (great toe)

Health Information

Symptoms

- Toe pain from sharp corner of toenail cutting into surrounding skin.
- Redness and swelling around the corner of the toenail is usually present.
- The area may drain pus or yellow fluid.
- The red area is very tender to touch or pressure from a shoe.
- Some teens with ingrown toenail can barely walk.

Cause

- The toenail is usually pushed into the skin by wearing tight shoes.
- The tiny cut made by the nail allows bacteria to enter the skin. The cut then becomes infected.
- The sharp corner of buried nail keeps growing. The deeper it goes, the more painful it becomes.

Care Advice

1. Overview

- Ingrown toenails are always painful.
- Pain is caused by the sharp toenail edge cutting into the skin around it.
- The pain can be stopped. Find the toenail corner and lift it out of the raw tissue.
- This will allow the area to heal.
- Most ingrown toenails can be treated at home. Surgery or nail removal is rarely needed.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Clean Area:

- Soak the toe in warm water and soap for 20 minutes twice a day.
- While soaking, massage the swollen part of the cuticle (skin next to the nail). Massage away from the nail.
- While soaking, also try to bend the corners of the toenail upward. Use your fingernail to lift it.
- Dry the toe and foot completely.

3. Elevate Corner of Toenail with Dental Floss:

- Goal: To help the toenail corner grow over the cuticle, rather than into it.
- The area won't heal until you expose the corner.
- Often you can lift it with your fingernail.
- If not, take a short strip of dental floss or fishing line. Try to slip it under the corner of the nail. Then, lift the nail upward. Cut off any sharp edge.
- Elevate the corner away from the cuticle with every soak.

4. Antibiotic Ointment:

- After each soak, put an antibiotic ointment on the swollen part of the toe.
- You can buy this ointment without a prescription.

5. **Taking Pressure Off Toenail With a Foam Pad or Cotton Ball:**
 - Until it heals, try to wear sandals or go barefoot.
 - When your child must wear closed shoes protect the ingrown toenail as follows:
 - If the INNER edge of the big toe is involved, try this technique. Tape a foam pad or cotton ball between the lower part of the first and second toes. Your goal is to keep the upper toes from touching.
 - If the OUTER edge is involved, do the same to the outside of the lower toe. Goal: keep the toenail from touching the side of the shoe.
 - Weather-stripping from a hardware store makes the best foam pad. Reason: has adhesive on one side.
 - Never wear tight, narrow, or pointed shoes.
6. **Prevention - Nail Trimming:**
 - Cut your child's toenails straight across so you can see the corners. Use a nail clipper.
 - Do not round off corners (keep the corners visible).
 - Do not cut them too short.
 - After baths or showers, the nails are soft. Bend the corners of the toenails upward. Use your fingernail to lift it.
7. **Prevention - Wear Shoes That Fit:**
 - Make sure that your child's shoes are not too narrow. Give away any pointed or tight shoes.
 - Tight narrow shoes are the most common cause of ingrown toenails.
 - Shoes should have a wide toe box. The toes should not feel cramped.
8. **What to Expect:**
 - With treatment, the pus should be gone in 48 hours.
 - Pain should be gone in 1 week.
 - Area should be healed up in 2 weeks.

Call Your Doctor If

- Spreading redness or fever occur
- Pus not gone after 48 hours
- Not improved after 7 days
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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