

Ingrown Toenail

What is an ingrown toenail?

An ingrown toenail is a toenail that grows into the surrounding skin or tissue of the toe. The toenail on the big toe is the one that is most commonly ingrown.

What is the cause?

An ingrown toenail usually occurs as a result of improper nail trimming. If a nail is cut curved instead of straight across, it may grow into the flesh at the edge of the nail.

Nails may also become ingrown as a result of direct blows or from wearing shoes or boots that are too tight.

What are the symptoms?

An area around the corners and edge of the toenail is painful. The toe may be swollen and red. There may be drainage. A toe with an ingrown toenail that becomes infected will be red and swollen and will have pus.

How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will examine your toe.

How is it treated?

To treat this condition:

- Soak the foot in a basin of warm water 2 or 3 times a day.
- Lift the corner of the nail with a pair of tweezers and place a small piece of cotton under this part of the nail. Change the piece of cotton every day.
- Keep feet clean and dry.
- Wear open-toed shoes or sandals.

In some cases your healthcare provider may need to remove all or part of the ingrown nail. Your provider will use a numbing medicine before doing this. If your toe is infected, you may need to take antibiotics.

How long will the effects last?

Your toe pain will start to improve as soon as the nail is removed.

How can I prevent an ingrown toenail?

- Trim your toenails straight across, using a nail clipper. Never cut down corners.
- Make sure your shoes fit well. Wear shoes that do not cramp your toes.

- If you have a toenail that tends to become ingrown, cushion it by putting cotton under the corners of the toenail and do not cut it short.

Developed by RelayHealth.

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.

Ingrown Toenail



Area where nail
grows into the skin

Copyright ©2014 McKesson Corporation and/or one of its subsidiaries. All rights reserved.