Splinter

What is a splinter?

A splinter is a sharp piece of wood, glass, metal, plastic, or other hard material that gets stuck in your skin.

How is it treated?

The care of a splinter depends on the size of the splinter, where it came from (some place clean or dirty), and where it is in your body. Small splinters in the skin or under fingernails or toenails can be painful, but they can usually be removed at home. It's best to have large or deep splinters, or splinters in the eye or mouth, removed by your healthcare provider.

Often you can use tweezers to remove a splinter that has an end sticking out.

1. First wash your hands and the skin over the splinter with soap and water. Clean the tweezers with soap and water or wipe them with rubbing alcohol.
2. Carefully grasp the end of the splinter that is sticking out and pull it out. If you have been stuck with many small spines from a plant, you may be able to get them out by putting tape over the area and then pulling the tape off. Or you might put rubber cement or white glue on your skin and let it dry. Then peel the dried glue off the skin. Many of the small spines will come out with the glue.
3. After the splinter is out, clean the wound with soap and water, rinse well, and dry your skin.

If the splinter is large or dirty:

- Put an antibiotic ointment on the wound.
- Keep the wound clean and dry, which may mean covering the wound with a bandage.

Check to see when you last had a tetanus shot. Get another shot as soon as possible after the injury if it has been more than 5 years since your last tetanus shot or if you don't know when you last had a tetanus shot. This is especially important if the wound is dirty or involves soil or rusty metal. Try to get the shot the same day as the injury if possible.

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.