



Ingrown Toenail (Onychocryptosis)

What's the problem?

An ingrown nail occurs when a portion of a toenail on either side of the toe turns downward and presses into the skin. Nails normally are nearly flat, with just a slight arcing downward at the borders. When the border of the nail is turned downward, it begins to injure the skin.



How does it feel?

Patient's usually feel pressure and eventually pain, as the hard and sharp nail edge creates further injury. Shoes that apply pressure to the toe increase the pain. If an infection develops, the pain becomes intolerable.

How did this happen?

The most common cause of ingrown nails is cutting the nails improperly, down at an angle instead of straight across. Another cause is wearing narrow or pointed shoes can apply enough pressure to a normal nail to turn the nail edge downward. You may begin to notice an enlargement or swelling of the skin around the nail edge and an increase in pain. The skin at the nail edge becomes reddened and swollen. You may notice drainage or pus from the area and the pain becomes intolerable.

How is it diagnosed?

An Ingrown Nail is identified by the doctor's physical exam. If an infection has developed, the doctor may send a sample of the drainage to a lab, to identify

what bacteria has caused the infection and which antibiotics will most easily cure the infection.

How Can I Care for Myself?

In mild cases, where no infection is present, pain relief can be obtained by applying a standard moisturizing cream to the nail edge and covering with a band aid. This softens the hard skin and often provides temporary pain relief. In more severe cases, where redness or obvious infection is present, seek the attention of a doctor.

How will my Doctor Care for me?

In the most minor cases, the podiatrist will simply cut the nail to shorten it, and show you how to cut the nail in the future, to prevent ingrowing of the nail again. In more severe cases, the podiatrist may remove the ingrown portion of the nail. The podiatrist will gently numb your toe, reshape the nail edge and finally, apply a medicine which will, in most cases, permanently prevent the nail edge from growing improperly again.

Can I prevent it from happening again?

Cut the nails **straight across**, so that the nail corner is visible.

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