

INGROWN TOENAIL

DESCRIPTION

A condition in which the sharp edge of a nail grows into the flesh of a toe, usually the great (big) toe.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Pain, tenderness, redness, swelling and heat in the toe where the sharp nail edge goes into the flesh of the toe. Once flesh surrounding the nail becomes inflamed, infection usually occurs.

CAUSES

- ** The nail is more curved than normal.
- ** The toenail is clipped back too far, so tissue can grow up over it.
- ** Shoes fit poorly, forcing the toe of the shoe against the nail and surrounding tissue.
- ** The person participates in activities that require sudden stops (“toe jamming”).
- ** Picking at your toenails.

WAYS TO HELP PREVENT

- ** Wear roomy, well-fitting shoes.
- ** Cut toenails carefully and straight across (be careful not to cut them too short)

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Curable with treatment. Oral antibiotics usually relieve symptoms of infection within 1 week. Then part or all of the toenail is removed surgically and the nail bed is scraped so the problem will not happen again. The nail may grow back, but it probably will not look the same. The doctor may decide it is best to destroy the growth center for that portion of the nail so it does not grow back.

GENERAL TREATMENT

- ** Surgery to remove the nail.

The following home treatment is appropriate either before or after surgery:

- use immersion soaks
- lift the nail corners free of surrounding inflamed tissue by wedging a small piece of cotton under the nail around the edges
- protect the inflamed tissue from further injury

MEDICATION

Antibiotics may be prescribed to fight infection.

ACTIVITY

Resume your normal activities as soon as symptoms get better. You may need to wear a shoe with the toe cut out until the toe heals.

NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF:

1. You have symptoms of an ingrown toenail.
2. The following occur during treatment or after surgery:
 - fever
 - increased pain
 - signs of infection in the toe (pain, redness, tenderness, swelling or heat)

Reviewed and revised 3/99 (RL 5.8)