

Education

Removal of Ingrown Toenail

What is removal of an ingrown toenail?

This is a procedure to remove part or all of a toenail that has grown into the surrounding skin.

When is it used?

Ingrown nails are removed when the toe has become so inflamed or infected that no other treatment will work to cure the problem.

How do I prepare for the procedure?

- Your health care provider may ask you to stop taking certain medicines before your toenail is removed (aspirin or other blood thinners, for example). Do not stop any medicines without talking to your provider first.
- You may need to plan to take a day or two off from your usual activities after the procedure is done.

What happens during the procedure?

The skin is cleansed with an antibacterial solution or alcohol. A local anesthetic is injected into the toe to numb part or all of the toe. A tourniquet may be put around the base of your toe to decrease bleeding during the procedure. Then your health care provider will cut away and remove part or all of the toenail. Afterwards an antibiotic and a bandage are put on the toe. You can go home soon after the nail is removed.

If you have had several ingrown nails in the same toe, your provider may destroy part of the area that the nail grows from. This can be done with a chemical or electrocautery (burning with an electric current). It may help to prevent the nail from becoming ingrown again.

What happens after the procedure?

- If your toe is infected, your provider may prescribe oral antibiotics. Follow your provider's instructions for taking the medicine.
- Rest and elevate your foot for 12 to 24 hours. Ask your provider when you will be able to resume your normal activities.
- Take the pain-relief medicine recommended or prescribed by your provider.
- Keep the bandage on your toe for the first day or two. When you are ready to remove the bandage, soaking your toe in warm water first may make it easier to remove the bandage.
- It will take 6 to 9 months for your nail to grow back. After the nail grows back, you can keep from getting another ingrown nail by cutting your nail straight across the top.
- Keep your follow-up appointment with your health care provider as recommended.

What are the benefits of this procedure?

Your toe hurts because the toenail is growing into it. Removing part of the nail is the only way to make it feel better and cure the problem.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

- A local anesthetic may not numb the area enough and you may feel some minor discomfort. Also, in rare cases, you may have an allergic reaction to the anesthetic.
- The toe may become infected.
- Rarely, the nail may not grow back

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your provider right away if:

- You develop a fever of 100°F (37.8°C) or higher.
- You have bleeding after the procedure that does not stop.
- You are having a lot of pain, especially if the pain is getting worse rather than better.
- Your toe is becoming dark or swollen.

Call your provider during office hours if:

- You have questions about the procedure or its result.

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