

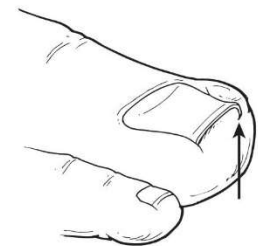
Toenail Removal

What is Nail Surgery?

Nail surgery is the removal of all or part of the toenail. This is done when a patient is suffering from one of a number of conditions that cause ongoing pain, discomfort, or infections. After either a partial or a total nail removal a chemical is applied to the exposed nail bed to prevent the nail from growing back. Healing takes between 4-8 weeks for a partial nail avulsion (removing part of the nail) and between 6-12 weeks for a total nail avulsion (removing all of the nail) but can take longer in some cases.

What Is an Ingrown Toenail?

When a toenail is ingrown, the nail is curved downward and grows into the skin, usually at the nail borders (the sides of the nail). This “digging in” of the nail irritates the skin, often creating pain, redness, swelling, and warmth in the toe.



Ingrown nail

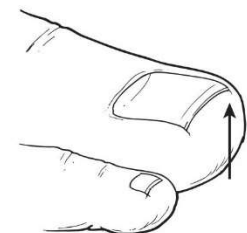
Treatment

Physician care:

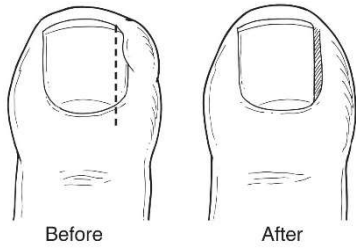
The surgeon will examine your toe and select the treatment best suited for you.

Treatment may include:

- **Oral antibiotics.** If an infection is present, an oral antibiotic may be prescribed.
- **Surgery.** A simple procedure, often performed in the office, is commonly needed to ease the pain and remove the offending nail. Surgery may involve numbing the toe and removing a corner of the nail, a larger portion of the nail, or the entire nail.
- **Permanent removal.** Various techniques may be used to destroy or remove the nail root. This treatment prevents the recurrence of an ingrown toenail. Your surgeon will determine the most appropriate procedure for you.



Normal nail



Following nail surgery, a light bandage will be applied. Most people experience very little pain after surgery and may resume normal activity the next day. If your surgeon has prescribed an oral antibiotic, be sure to take all the medication, even if your symptoms have improved.

What are the symptoms post nail surgery?

When the anesthetic wears off the toe may be uncomfortable and the toe may continue to bleed for a short time when you get home. You may wish to take acetaminophen (Tylenol) but it is best to avoid Aspirin as this could reduce the clotting ability.

What are the benefits and risks to me?

The benefits of nail surgery are a reduction of pain and a long term solution. Nail surgery is known to be very safe and effective. However, no operation can guarantee success all the time. In rare cases the following may occur:

Nail Regrowth – every step is taken to prevent the regrowth of the nail, however there is a small percentage (5%) where regrowth occurs.

Delayed Healing – healing can be slow and can depend on your age, health, how quickly your skin takes to heal and how you look after your toe.

Infection of the wound– this may present itself as a red, hot, inflamed, painful toe. A swab may be taken to ascertain if an infection is present and that if it is infected it is treated with the correct antibiotics.

Bleeding and Bruising – bleeding may occur after nail surgery. It is important to keep the foot elevated and rest for the remainder of the day.

Allergic Reaction – anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction. It is a risk, although it is rare and highly unlikely.

Pain – in very rare cases, prolonged pain can be experienced. Most cases of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome are triggered by an injury and the resulting pain is more severe and long-lasting than normal. Due to anxiety of having the procedure patients can sometimes feel agitated, feel dizzy or sick and in rare cases loses consciousness.

Popular Questions Asked by Patients

Will I be able to drive after the surgery?

It is not advisable to drive after surgery as your toe will be numb and your insurance may be invalid, meaning you are not covered if you had an accident.

How long will it take to heal?

Healing can be slow and can depend on your age, health, how quickly your skin takes to heal and how you look after your toe. This can vary between 4 and 12 weeks on average, it could be longer in rare cases.

When can I go back to school / work?

Directly after the surgery it is important to get home and rest. Normally it would be safe to resume normal activities the following day, but refrain from activities like sport that may injure the toe. Excess pressure on the toe will delay healing. If you use steel toecap boots, so long as the toebox doesn't press on the wound, you should be able to resume work after first the redressing.

How long will my toe be numb for and will it be painful when the anaesthetic wears off?

The anaesthetic will last for 2-4 hours. You may experience some discomfort following this. If you do require painkillers then take them as directed on the packet. Avoid anything containing Aspirin.

Dressing

Change the dressing about 48 hours after the surgery. Follow your provider's instructions for changing the dressing. Your provider may recommend soaking your foot in warm water before removing the dressing. This helps the bandage to not stick to the wound.

In the following days, change the dressing once or twice a day or as suggested by your surgeon.

Keep your wound covered both day and night in the first week. You can let your toe remain uncovered at night in the second week. This helps the wound heal.

Redressing Your Toes

This should be done every day. Make sure you have the following:

- Clean bowl, warm water and a tablespoon of salt per wash
- Sterile non adherent dressings

What to Do:

- Half fill the bowl of warm water and add the salt
- Remove the dressing if comes off easily, otherwise soak off in the water
- Immerse the toe in the water for 1-2 minutes
- Dry around the toe and then allow to fully air dry for 2-3 minutes
- Cover the toe with the sterile dressing

The toe will continue to discharge for up to 12 weeks. This can be a pale to straw coloured discharge and is a normal part of healing.