

INGROWN TOENAIL



An ingrown toenail is the name given to a toenail that has grown into the skin at the side of the toe. The toenail curls and pierces the skin, which may become red, swollen and sore. Bacteria may infect the skin, making it more swollen and painful, with white or yellow liquid (pus) coming from the affected area.

Anyone can develop an ingrown toenail. Usually the big toenail is affected, but it can happen to other toenails.

Ingrown toenails may be caused by:

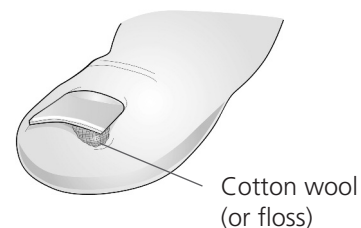
- cutting your toenails too short, cutting the edges of the nail, or tearing the nail off
- wearing tight-fitting shoes, socks or tights
- having toenails with naturally curved sides
- sweaty feet – because the skin around the nail will be softer
- injury, such as stubbing your toe.

How can I treat ingrown toenails?

Without treatment, an ingrown toenail may get infected. With an infection, the affected skin will be hot, red, swollen and painful, and you may see pus. You may also have a temperature. If you think the skin around your nail is infected, see your doctor.

If you don't think your skin is infected, and only a small part of your toenail is cutting into the skin, you can try following these steps:

1. Soak your toe in water for 10 minutes to soften the skin around the toenail.
2. Use a cotton wool bud to gently push the skin around the toenail down and away from the nail. Start at the root of the toenail and work upwards.
3. Push a tiny piece of cotton wool or dental floss under the end of the toenail. As the nail grows forwards, this will help it to grow over the skin and not into the skin.
4. Repeat steps 1 and 2 every day for a few weeks. Change the cotton wool or dental floss every day, each time you soak your toe.
5. When the nail has grown past the end of your toe, cut it straight across. Don't cut the edges of the nail to make it curved.



What else can help?

Take one or two 500mg paracetamol tablets up to 4 times a day to help with the pain.

Do I need to see my doctor?

See your doctor if:

- you have diabetes
- the skin around your nail is infected. With an infection, your skin will be hot, red, swollen and painful, and you may see pus. You may also have a temperature.
- you've treated your toenail for 7 days (see treatment section), but it isn't better, or it's getting worse
- you also have a fungal nail infection (toenail turns white, black, yellow or green, is thicker or has an unusual shape; it may also be more brittle and bits of nail may break off).

How can I stop an ingrown toenail developing?

- Wear shoes, tights and socks that give your toes enough space to move.
- Wash your feet every day with soap and water to keep them clean.
- Cut your toenails straight across. Toenails that curve at the top are more likely to dig into the skin around your nail. Use a nail file on any sharp edges.

Where can I find further information?

Patient UK: www.patient.info

NHS Direct Wales: www.nhsdirect.wales.uk

NHS Direct Wales Tel: 0845 4647 (open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Calls from landlines and mobiles cost 2p per minute, in addition to telephone providers access charge.