

INGROWN TOENAILS



In-Grown Toenails Explained

Our nails are important - they act as shields to protect the tender skin underneath, known as the nail bed. Nails also add strength and increase sensation in the finger tips and toes.

Ingrown toenails are painful conditions characterized by the side of the nail growing into the surrounding skin.

As the nail grows into the skin, bleeding and infection can occur. The nail can become embedded into the skin; at this point the body will recognise the piece of nail as a foreign body and will build up an immune response to try and attack the nail to get rid of it. Consequently, the side of the toe will become very red, hot and inflamed. Pus and bleeding may also be present. In addition, the toe may feel tender to touch. If the piece of nail is left in the skin too long, new skin may begin to form over the top causing a hard lump by the nail.

Causes

- Poor fitting footwear (too tight)
- Hereditary factors
- Poor foot function
- Poor nail cutting technique (nails cut too short)
- Injury (eg running)
- Picking down the sides of the nail
- Nail structural problems (changes to the shape of the nail)

The causes outlined above are the most common.

You can help to prevent ingrown toenails by wearing correctly fitted shoes, cutting your nails appropriately and maintaining good hygiene.

If you find yourself with an ingrown toenail, be assured that the treatments available are simple and effective.

Some people will make an appointment to see their GP and may be given antibiotics; although the symptoms may temporarily subside, the problem is still affecting the toe. The nail spike that has grown into the skin will need to be removed by a podiatrist to solve the problem.

Caution

It should be highlighted that if you are elderly, diabetic, have heart problems or are taking certain medications, you should seek advice from a podiatrist for correct nail cutting techniques.

This also applies to patients who are partially sighted.



Treatments

The treatments performed are simple and quick; the podiatrist will have you back on your feet in no time. Podiatrists are experts at dealing with ingrown toenails.

A common treatment performed is to simply cut away the nail spike that has grown into the skin. This is generally performed on patients who present with minor pain and a mild ingrown toenail.

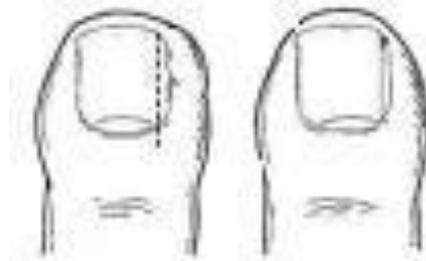
Once the nail has been removed, the toe is dressed with an anti-septic dressing which is to be left on the toe for a few days.

This treatment procedure is the most common treatment carried out when a patient visits the clinic.

If the nail is deeply embedded into the surrounding skin and the area is very painful to touch, the podiatrist may decide to inject a local anaesthetic into the toe and remove the nail from the skin the same way as stated above. The local anaesthetic will take away all the pain for you and allow the podiatrist to remove the nail spike successfully.

This procedure is commonly performed and is no worse than having a local anaesthetic at the dentist for a tooth filling. Your toe will also be dressed and checked after a few days.

There is, however, a permanent solution to ingrown toenails. This involves a minor surgery procedure where a local anaesthetic again is injected into the toe to eliminate pain and feeling. The troublesome side of the nail is fully removed, then a chemical is applied to prevent the nail from growing back and into the skin again. This leaves a straight edge to the nail and as it grows forward it will not grow into the skin.



The picture above demonstrates the amount of nail that is cut away leaving you with a straight edge.

The surgery itself will take one hour; your toe will be dressed and the podiatrist will see you for several re-dressing appointments and give you further instructions to promote the best way of healing. Overall the nail will heal in a minimum of 6 weeks.

This is a simple procedure which gives good cosmetic results. Our clinic offers a guarantee with nail surgery; in the unlikely event of the nail

growing back, we will perform the procedure again free of charge.

If you have any further questions, or wish to enquire further about the minor surgery procedure, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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