

# Ingrown Toenail: Care Instructions

## Your Care Instructions

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An ingrown toenail often occurs because a nail is not trimmed correctly or because shoes are too tight. An ingrown nail can cause an infection.

If your toe is infected, your doctor may prescribe antibiotics. Most ingrown toenails can be treated at home. You should trim toenails straight across, so the ends of the nail grow over the skin and not into it. Good nail care can prevent ingrown toenails.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

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- Trim the nails straight across. Leave the corners a little longer so they do not cut into the skin. To do this when you have an ingrown nail:
  - Soak your foot in warm water for about 15 minutes to soften the nail.
  - Wedge a small piece of wet cotton under the corner of the nail to cushion the nail and lift it slightly. This keeps it from cutting the skin.
  - Repeat daily until the nail has grown out and can be trimmed.
- Do not use manicure scissors to dig under the ingrown nail. You might stab your toe, which could get infected.
- Do not trim your toenails too short.
- Check with your doctor before trimming your own toenails if you have been diagnosed with diabetes or peripheral arterial disease. These conditions increase the risk of an infection, because you may have decreased sensation in your toes and cut yourself without knowing it.
- Wear roomy, comfortable shoes.

- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.

## When should you call for help?

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**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have signs of infection, such as:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
  - Red streaks leading from the toe.
  - Pus draining from the toe.
  - A fever.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have problems trimming your nails.
- You do not get better as expected.

### Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.healthwise.net/ed>

Enter **R135** in the search box to learn more about "**Ingrown Toenail: Care Instructions**".

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