

## Ingrown toenails

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### What is an ingrown toenail?

An ingrown toenail occurs when the corner or side of the nail grows down into the skin and flesh of your toe. This causes pain, redness and swelling. Rough or red skin may grow over the area. An ingrown toenail can also become infected.

This is a common problem that occurs most often in the big toe, but it can occur on any toe.

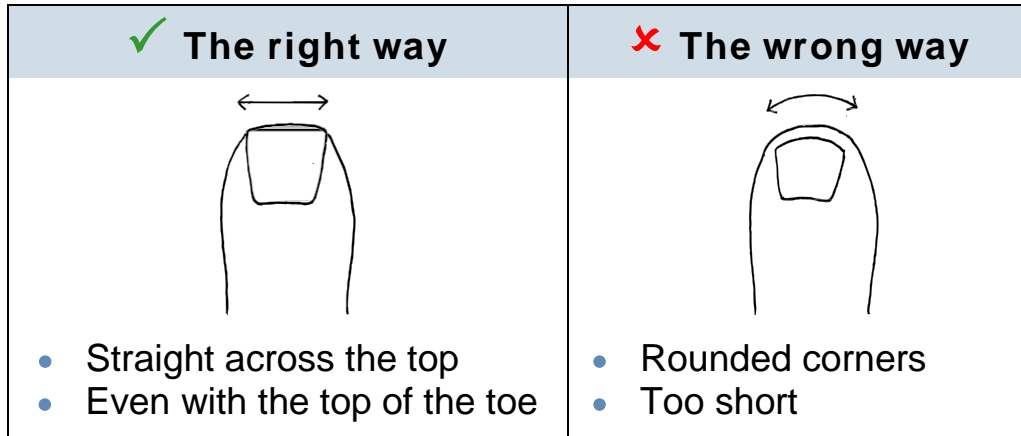
### What causes an ingrown toenail?

- Cutting your toenails the wrong way (too short or with rounded edges).
- Tearing, pulling or picking toenails.
- Wearing shoes that are too tight around your toes.
- Wearing sweaty socks for long periods of time.
- Repeated injury from activities such as running or kicking a soccer ball.
- Certain long-term conditions can increase the chances of getting an ingrown toenail. For example: diabetes, obesity, thyroid, heart or kidney conditions.

### How can I prevent an ingrown toenail?

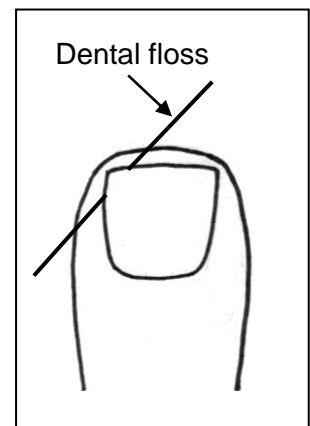
- Cut your toenails straight across, leaving the corners square.
- **Do not pick or tear off toenails.**
- Keep your feet clean and dry.
- Keep feet open to air as often as possible.
- Change your socks often if your feet get sweaty.
- **Do not wear tight fitting shoes.**

## How should I cut my toenails?



## How is an ingrown toenail treated?

- Clean the area 2 or 3 times each day. Soak your foot in warm water for about 5 minutes.
- Use a cotton-tipped swab to gently push back the nailbed. Rinse and dry your foot.
- Try to keep your foot open to air. Avoid socks.
- Gently put a piece of dental floss diagonally under the corner of the nail. This should relieve the pain from the ingrown toenail. Replace the floss if it comes out or gets dirty.
- As your toenail grows, it should no longer cut into your skin.



If you think your toenail has become infected, see your doctor. If you have a severe infection, your doctor may prescribe medications.

In a few people, the infection keeps coming back and the doctor has to remove part or all of the toenail. For severe problems the root of the nail may need to be removed.

**If you are concerned about your child, please contact the Pediatric General Surgery Nurse Practitioner: 905-521-2100, ext. 73618**