

Patient Education Handout: Ingrown Toenail

- An ingrown toenail occurs when the corner of your toenail grows into the skin around the nail. This causes an inflammatory response leading to pain, redness, and in more severe cases, pus and infection.
- The most common causes of an ingrown toenail include poorly fitting shoes, excessive trimming of the side of the nail, and trauma.
- You can prevent an ingrown toenail by wearing shoes that are not too tight around your toes and cutting your toenails straight across and not too short.
- Depending on the severity of your symptoms, your health care provider may remove a portion of the nail to help relieve the pain and inflammation.

No Nail Removal:

- Relieve the pressure off the toe by placing a piece of dental floss or small piece of a cotton ball under the corner of your toenail.
- Soak the foot in warm, soapy water or warm salt water for 10-15 minutes 3 to 4 times per day for 1 to 2 weeks or until the inflammation has improved.

Nail Removal:

- Elevate your foot for 2-3 hours after the procedure to decrease pain as the numbing agent wears off.
- Continue to elevate your foot and apply ice to your toe over the next 48 to 72 hours whenever possible to help reduce pain and swelling.
- Soak the toe in warm water for 10-15 minutes every 3-4 hours for the first 2 days after the procedure.
- Oral analgesics (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen) may be taken for pain relief as directed by your health care provider.

You may take:

- Acetaminophen ____ to ____ mg every ____ to ____ hours as needed
- Ibuprofen ____ to ____ mg every ____ to ____ hours as needed

- Wear open-toed shoes after the initial procedure.
- Soak the dressing before you remove it to prevent bleeding and discomfort as it may stick.
- Apply antibacterial ointment and cover with a clean bandage daily for 7-10 days.
- Watch for signs and symptoms of infection (pus, fever, increased pain and redness, red streaks near the wound, increased swelling) and return to the clinic or seek care from another health care provider.
- Return to the clinic for re-examination of the wound in _____.

