

# INGROWN TOENAIL

## SYMPTOMS AND CHARACTERISTICS

- Tenderness, redness and swelling of the skin surrounding the corner of the toenail on one of the big toes.
- Ingrown toenails are usually due to tight shoes (such as cowboy boots) and/or improper cutting of the toenails. Children with wide feet are predisposed, since many shoes come in only one width.
- Ingrown toenails take several weeks to clear up.

## CALL YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICIAN DURING OFFICE HOURS IF:

- Any pus or yellow drainage is present.
- The corner of the nail is impossible to locate.
- The problem is a recurrent one.
- You have other questions.

## HOME CARE

### Soaking:

Soak the foot twice a day in 1:60 bleach solution (1 tablespoon of bleach to 1 quart of water) for 20 minutes. This solution kills most germs. Add a little dishwashing detergent to help penetration. While soaking, massage outward the part of the cuticle (skin next to the nail) that is swollen. A "cuticle pusher" (available in most drugstores) may be helpful.

### Cut off the Corner of the Toenail:

The pain is always caused by the corner of the toenail rubbing against the cuticle. Only this once, cut the corner off so the irritated tissue can quiet down and heal. If the corner is buried in the swollen cuticle, have your physician remove it. The main purpose of treatment is to help the nail grow over the cuticle rather than get stuck in it. Therefore, during soaks, try to bend the nail corners upward. You can try to wedge some cotton under the edge of the nail, but for practical purposes, this is impossible during the infected phase. Filing or cutting a wedge out of the center of the upper edge of the nail may help the corners bend upward.

### Antibiotic Ointment:

If your child's cuticle is just red and irritated, an antibiotic ointment is probably not needed. But, if the cuticle is swollen or oozing, apply Neosporin ointment (no prescription needed) 5 or 6 times a day.

### Shoes:

Have your child wear sandals or go barefoot as much as possible to prevent pressure on the toenail. When your child must wear closed shoes, protect the ingrown toenail as follows: If the inner edge is involved, tape cotton between the first and second toes to keep them from touching. If the outer edge is involved, tape cotton to the outside of the ball of the toe to keep the toenail from touching the side of the shoe.

### Call Your Child's Physician Later If:

- The ingrown toenail becomes infected.
- The problem is not much better in 1 week.
- The problem is not totally resolved in 2 weeks.

### PREVENTION:

Prevent recurrences by making sure that your child's shoes are not too narrow. Give away those pointed or tight shoes. After the cuticle is healed, cut the toenails straight across, leaving the corners. Don't cut them too short. After baths, while the nails are pliable, bend the corners of the nails upward.