

Ingrown Toenails

If you feel sharp, pinching pains around the nail of your toe, it might be related to ingrown toenails. Ingrown toenails, also known as onychocryptosis occur when the nail of your big toe or other toes, starts to curve and grows downwards into the fleshy skin on either side of the nail. This can be quite painful for most patients and can become extreme if untreated. Ingrown toenails start out hard, swollen, and tender. The skin will often become red and inflamed and might drain yellow fluid or pus if the condition worsens. Left untreated, they may become sore, red, and infected and the skin may start to grow over the ingrown toenail. Once in a while the condition progresses to a point where the bone may become infected. This is called Osteomyelitis.

The most common cause of ingrown toenails is improper trimming of the toenails. When the nails are cut too short or trimmed in a curved shape, the nail is in the perfect position to grow downwards into the skin. By cutting toenails straight across, most patients can possibly avoid developing ingrown toenails. The condition can also be caused by improperly fitted footwear which pinch the toes and create added pressure. There is also a hereditary component to develop ingrown toenails, if one or both of your parents has had the problem; you may be at increased risk for developing this condition. Sometimes an injury can cause the ingrown toenail.

In most cases, treating ingrown toenails is simple: the offending ingrown portion of the toenail needs to be removed. Sometimes this can be done without any anesthesia. Soaking afterwards may also help. Avoid wearing tight shoes or socks. Antibiotics are sometimes prescribed if an infection is present. Dr. Harvey Danciger is an expert at treating ingrown toenails and relieving the pain that is often accompanied by it. The majority of his patients lives in Southern California and frequently wears sandals with the warm climate. This patient can attest for how ingrown toenails can be a major hindrance for enjoying sandal weather and wearing normal shoes.

Note: Please consult Dr. Danciger before taking any medications. In severe cases, if an acute infection occurs, surgical removal of part of the ingrown toenail may be needed. Known as partial nail plate avulsion, the procedure involves injecting the toe with an anesthetic and cutting out the ingrown part of the toenail. The nail will regrow. If this turns out to be a recurring problem, a procedure can be done to remove the side of the toenail and the root of the nail, which will prevent the side of the nail from growing back out and causing any more ingrown nails and the pain associated with it. This is called a matrixectomy and is done in the office.

Ingrown toenails can possibly be prevented by:

- Trimming toenails straight across with no rounded corners.
- Ensuring that shoes and socks are not too tight.
- Keeping feet clean at all times.