

# Merrimack Valley Pediatrics

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## **INGROWN TOE NAIL HOME CARE:**

**Treatment** — Infection will occur as bacteria invade the closed space where the nail meets the skin (lateral nail fold). Proper nail trimming is very important. Do not cut and avoid allowing nails to break off below the lateral margin of the toenail. The nail edges should be allowed to grow well beyond the lateral nail fold before trimming horizontally (see figures below). Exposure to air kills some types of bacteria. Well-fitting shoes that don't put pressure on the toes and wearing clean cotton socks daily are also important in preventing problems. Athletic children should be sure to change into clean socks after sports.

**Mild inflammation** — Mild inflammation is characterized by minimal to moderate pain, little redness, and no discharge. These can be treated conservatively as follows:

Soak the affected foot in warm water for 20 minutes, three times per day, pushing the lateral nail fold away from the nail plate.

Place cotton wedging from a cotton ball or dental floss underneath the lateral nail plate to separate the nail plate from the skin fold, thereby relieving pressure.

**Moderate Inflammation:** The toe becomes red, swollen and painful, colored drainage occurs.

Soak as previously described.

Take hydrogen peroxide, full strength or diluted with equal parts hydrogen peroxide and tap water to cleanse the enflamed areas. Use cotton-tipped swabs, soaked in this solution and apply to the painful, swollen tissues, 2-3 times per day. Clean debris from lateral nail fold using a cuticle trimmer or "orange stick" —a rounded wooden stick cut on a 45 degree angle (ask your pharmacist if you have trouble finding one).

Pack cotton wedging in the space between the sore, swollen skin tissue and nail as above to elevate swollen tissues and expose to the air. Packing the nail edge will be less painful after the foot has been soaked for 15-20 minutes. Ask someone to help with the packing if it is too uncomfortable.

Follow this application with topical antibiotic ointment applied to the red skin. Use gauze to wrap the toe. Wrap it loosely to allow air circulation and tape it to prevent dislodgement.

Don't forget to the toe soak frequently!

**Severe inflammation:** There is marked redness, swelling and pain and or fever.

Schedule an office visit and treat as above until your appointment.

