

Nail surgery

Your GP has decided that the best course of treatment for the problem with your nail is to have minor surgery. You may be given an antibiotic to start a few days before the surgery.

Partial nail avulsion

The procedure involves an injection of local anaesthetic to each side of the base of your toe. This will numb your toe, leaving you pain free during the procedure. A narrow strip of nail will be removed from one or both sides of the affected toenail. The exposed part of the nail bed will be treated with a chemical called phenol. The chemical destroys the nail bed and prevents recurrence of the problem in most cases. Following this procedure you will be left with a narrower piece of nail.

Risks

The aim of the procedure is to provide a permanent cure to your ingrown toenail. This is a safe procedure, and most patients are happy with the results, however as with any operation there are some risks attached:

- Pain after your operation which varies from person to person
- The procedure involves the use of a chemical which on occasion may cause irritation to the treated area
- As with any local anaesthetic there is a risk of an allergic reaction
- The treated nail bed and surrounding tissue may become infected
- Rarely damage to the nerve or blood flow
- Rarely permanent deformity of the remaining nail may occur
- Rarely the nail may re-grow and the condition may recur

On the day of the surgery

You may eat and drink as normal and take your usual medication on the day of your surgery, unless instructed otherwise by your doctor. The procedure will take about 45 minutes, before starting the doctor will discuss the procedure with you and make sure that you are happy to continue.

You will need to bring an open toed shoe or loose slipper to wear following the procedure to accommodate the dressing. You will be given a follow up appointment and receive advice on how to care for the wound at home. Healing times vary from 6-12 weeks.

After your procedure, it is important to keep the foot dry and keep the bandages on. Rest with the foot up as much as possible. You might notice some blood on the bandage on the day of the procedure. This is normal, but you can call the GP surgery if you have questions.

Self-aftercare

Following the surgery a dressing and bandage will be applied to your toe. The bandage can be taken off after 24 hours. The dressing should remain in place until you are reviewed a few days after the surgery.

Frequently asked questions

1. Will the operation hurt?

The only part of the procedure that you should feel will be the injection of the local anaesthetic. This can be a little sore. The doctor will leave the toe for 5-10 minutes to ensure adequate numbing. The doctor will then check to make sure you are unable to feel the toe before proceeding.

2. Will I be able to go to school / work straight away?

Ideally you need to rest on the day of the procedure. This aids healing. There is no reason why you should not return to school / work the following day, providing you wear roomy footwear as advised and do not do activities which would aggravate the wound.

3. Will it be painful afterwards?

This varies person to person. Some people experience pain, whilst others report no discomfort. You may wish to take over the counter analgesia such as paracetamol and ibuprofen in the days following the procedure.

4. Can I drive afterwards?

We strongly advise that you do not drive until the numbness wears off. Doing so may invalidate your car insurance.

5. When can I shower / bath / swim?

You may shower the day after the surgery, but it is best to avoid getting the dressing wet. If you are bathing or showering leave your dressing in place until after your shower and then redress if required. Avoid swimming for at least the next 2 weeks. Try to keep the toe clean and dry.