

## Common Nail Problems

- Ingrown Nail** A portion of your toenail starts growing into the nail fold, causing pain and irritation. They are most common in teenagers & young adults but can occur in adults and are usually hereditary. Ingrowing toenails can get infected which can lead to redness, drainage, and sometimes bleeding tissue. Treatment options include a partial nail avulsion which means the portion of the toenail that is ingrowing is removed. After a nail avulsion, the nail will grow back and can lead to the same pain and irritation. This procedure is reserved if it is the first time you've had an ingrown or if the ingrown is so infected, a permanent procedure can't be performed. The other treatment option is a matrixectomy which is permanent removal of the ingrowing portion of nail using a chemical. Healing after either procedure is relatively quick but does require some post operative care. Your provider may also prescribe antibiotics if needed. At home it is important to cut your nails straight across.
- Fungal Nail** Caused by invasion of fungus in one or more toenails. Medical conditions such as diabetes, HIV, immunosuppressed states, tinea pedis, and peripheral artery disease increase risk of onychomycosis (fungal nails). Getting pedicures or walking barefoot in public areas are also risk factors. Generally, treating fungal toenails is difficult and requires long treatment. Oral treatment is the most effective but requires lab work to test liver enzymes prior to beginning the medicine. The oral fungal medication must be taken for 12 weeks and only works on the new toenail that is growing out. Topical antifungals are less effective and usually need to be used for longer. Jublia is the one topical medication that studies have shown is almost as effective as the oral treatment however, it is generally not covered by insurance. Laser treatment can be done but should be done in combination with topical medication.
- Traumatic Nail** Toenails can become discolored, thickened, brittle, or deformed after sustaining trauma (dropping a heavy object, bruising under nail plate from activity such as hiking or running, and if you've had previous nail removal). Traumatic nails are permanently deformed and usually grow with curvature on all sides and can become very thick with horizontal lines. Occasionally after the nail has stopped growing, the new toenail can grow under looking like a double toenail. No medications will improve the appearance of traumatic toenails. For chronically painful traumatic nails, the only option would be to have the entire nail removed and cauterized to prevent regrowth. Removing the toenail without cauterization will lead to the same toenail deformity once the nail grows out.
- Nail dystrophy** Toenails appear brittle and thick, especially at the tips of the nails. Most affected nails are the great toes and 2<sup>nd</sup> toenails in which the 2<sup>nd</sup> toes are slightly longer than others. People who do extensive running, walking and exercise can get nail thickening at tips which is called "runner nails". There is no treatment for dystrophic nail plate. Some diseases such as Psoriatic Arthritis can also cause dystrophy of nail. Chronic swelling of feet tends to increase pressure in toenails which can lead to dystrophic toenails.
- Beau's Lines** Horizontal lines that occur across nail plate due to stunt in growth of nail at base of nail under skin. Usually occur from shoes that are too small, shoes that are too large (causing toes to press at front of shoe), or from excessive exercising on tip toes.
- Dehydrated Nail** Occur after prolonged use of nail polish. When you remove the polish, the chemical from polish peels off superficial layers of the top portion of nail causing a white residue. If no polish is applied further, the nail should grow out healthy appearing.

**Appropriately fitting shoes are important to prevent some of these injuries to your nail plate. Our feet get longer as we age due to collapse of arch and weakness in muscles & ligaments. Always allow a thumbs width between the back of the heel and back of your shoe to allow toes to stretch and prevent injuries to nails.**