

## Nail surgery Information sheet

There are many common conditions which can cause the nail and/or the surrounding skin to become painful or inflamed:

- In growing toenails - the nail penetrates into the surrounding tissue causing an inflammatory reaction and/or infection.
- Involuted toenails - a nail that is curling into the flesh but is not actually piercing the skin. These can also feel painful and appear red and inflamed.
- Thickened nails - nails that are growing thickly and causing pain. This can be a result of previous trauma/ injury or due to a fungal infection.

### How can this be corrected?

There are two common minor surgical procedures that can be carried out to toenails depending on which problem you have. Both procedures will involve a local anaesthetic.

### Partial Nail Avulsion

One or both edges of the nail are removed and the root of the nail (matrix) is cauterised using a chemical called phenol. This prevents these painful sections of nails from re-growing. Otherwise, predictably the nail will re-grow in the same way and produce the same problem. The healing time for this procedure is 4-6 weeks (average).



*Ingrown toenail- before surgery*



*Ingrown toenail after partial nail avulsion.*



## Total Nail Avulsion

The entire nail or part of the nail is removed and the root of the nail (matrix) is cauterised using a chemical called phenol. This prevents the nail from re-growing. Otherwise, predictably the nail will re-grow in same way and produce the same problem. The healing time for this procedure is 6-8 weeks (average).



Thickened fungal nail - before surgery



Toenail after total nail avulsion

Following an assessment within the podiatry department we will determine if you will benefit from either a partial or total nail avulsion.

The intended benefits of the surgery are:

- Correction or resolution of nail problem
- Reduction in long-term pain
- Reduction in re-current infections

Possible complications of the surgery include:

- Reaction to local anaesthesia (rare)
- Post-operative infection
- Re-growth of nail (5% risk)
- Loss of sensation locally (temporary)
- Phenol burn
- Temporary pain
- Altered cosmetic appearance
- Bruising
- Delayed healing
- Complications due to poor compliance/aftercare
- Temporary loss of nail plate (if having a partial nail avulsion)

## Preparing for surgery:

- Please remove all traces of nail varnish from the toenails.
- Do not drink any alcohol for 24 hours prior to surgery.
- Take any medication as normal unless advised otherwise.
- **Bring suitable footwear that will fit over a bulky dressing.** I.e. Flip-flops or open toe sandals.
- **Arrange transport home after surgery-** you should not walk home or travel by public transport to avoid injury. We recommend arranging a lift home or taking a taxi.
- You must not have any local anaesthetic for 24 hours before or after your surgery.
- **Inform employer/school of the surgery as you will need to rest the affected foot for at least 24 hours after surgery.**
- Avoid planning a holiday for up to eight weeks after your surgery, as you may be required to attend clinic appointments during this time.
- Patients under the age of 16 will need to attend with a parent/legal guardian.
- **If you have diabetes**, and have been asked to have a blood test, you **MUST** go and see you GP, as we will require a copy of your most recent blood glucose levels. (This is not the same as home meter readings).

## On the day of the surgery

- Please take a bath or shower
- Please remove all traces of nail varnish
- Do not drink any alcohol (see 'Preparing for Surgery')
- Eat a normal light meal before the surgery
- Take any medication as normal unless advised otherwise.
- If you use a GTN spray, inhalers or an Epi-Pen, you must bring these with you on the day of the surgery.
- You will be asked for written consent prior to the surgery. Patients under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent/legal guardian with you, who can provide the written consent on your behalf.
- You are permitted to bring **one** adult into the treatment room with you, if you wish. Please note that accompanying children are not allowed into the treatment room.
- Bring suitable footwear that will fit over a bulky dressing. i.e. Flip-flops or open toe sandals.
- You must not drive for 24 hours after you have had the surgery (Road Traffic Act).
- Go straight home after surgery and sit with your foot elevated. We recommend that you rest the affected foot for at least 24 hours.
- You must keep the large bandage dry and in place until your redressing appointment. This is usually within 4-7 days and the appointment will be issued on the day of surgery.
- On the day of surgery your toe will be dressed with a large bandage that you will need to keep on and dry until you return approximately 4-7 days later

## After surgery:

- The toe may remain numb for up to two hours. You should rest the affected foot for at least 24 hours after surgery.
- When the anaesthetic wears off, you may experience some discomfort. You can take your over the counter painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen to reduce this. Please follow the instructions on the patient information leaflet.
- You must not have any local anaesthetic for 24 hours after your surgery.
- Continue to keep the dressing dry and in place. It is normal for some blood/fluid to appear through the dressing. If needed, you can apply some additional gauze on top of the existing dressing. (A pack of gauze will be provided after your surgery.)
- If you experience a lot of bleeding which cannot be stopped by raising your foot, you should seek medical advice.
- If the dressing comes loose, please apply more tape to secure it. (Some tape will be provided after your surgery). We recommend wearing a loose fitting sock over the affected foot at bedtime to prevent the dressing coming off.
- Do not drink alcohol for 24 hours after surgery.
- You may need some time off work or school. It is important to avoid any undue pressure or injury to the toe, and it may be advisable to inform your employer/teacher of the procedure.
- To help the wound heal and to reduce the risk of infection, it is important to avoid all high impact sports/ gym activities and swimming.
- It is very important that you attend your redressing appointment. This will be issued to you after the surgery.

## Redressing:

- **Please Note:**
  - If you attend Hornsey Central Health Centre for the procedure, your redressing appointment will be at Bounds Green Health Centre.
  - If you attend Holloway Community Health Centre for the procedure, your redressing appointment will be at Holloway Community Health Centre.
- The first redressing appointment will be undertaken within 4-7 days of the surgery. The bulky dressing will be replaced by a much thinner sterile dressing.
- After the first redressing appointment, the podiatrist will show you how to carry out dressing changes at home, and you will be expected to continue with redressing the toe yourself. You will also be provided with a written redressing advice leaflet.
- You will be provided with a five day redressing pack, and further dressings can be obtained via prescription from your G.P or purchased at your local chemist.
- During the first few weeks after nail surgery, small amounts of blood or discharge are normal and are an essential part of the healing process. This discharge does not mean that the wound has become infected.
- Do not use antiseptic creams, solutions or dressings as these may affect the wound healing process.

- If you experience a sudden increase in temperature, pain or excessive inflammation/swelling this may indicate that the toe has become infected. Please contact your GP, Podiatry Department on 020 3316 1111 or Out of Hours Services for advice as further treatment may be required. Please note: podiatrists cannot prescribe antibiotics.
- Most patients will only require an appointment with a podiatrist for the first redressing, after which you should carry out the redressing's as you have been shown, until the wound has fully healed.
- Avoid strenuous/ high impact exercise or sport until the nail bed has fully healed.
- Failure to comply with advice given is likely to slow healing and/or encourage an infection, and may also cause the nail problem to re-occur.

### **Frequent reasons why your nail surgery may be cancelled on the day:**

- You have not removed nail varnish.
- You have failed to bring in the medication/inhalers required on the day of the procedure.
- You have failed to arrange suitable footwear and/or organise suitable transport home.
- We have not received a copy of your most recent (within last three months) blood glucose levels.

### **Please note:**

Effectiveness of this care plan relies on both the clinician and patient agreeing to and following the advice outlined above. You have agreed that you understand the advice you have been given today and consent to ongoing treatment. Failure to follow the advice given may result in withdrawal of care so that valuable resources can be given to patients with greater need and greater commitment to their care plan.

Following your pre-surgery assessment, please contact the Podiatry Central Booking Service (details below) if there is a change in circumstances such as:

- Any medication changes
- You are pregnant or think you may be pregnant.
- You are breast feeding.
- You have been diagnosed with diabetes.
- You have been diagnosed with a kidney or liver disorder.
- You have been diagnosed with epilepsy or recently had an epileptic seizure/ fit.

**Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)**

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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[www.whittington.nhs.uk](http://www.whittington.nhs.uk)

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