

PARONYCHIA



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Inflammation of tissue folds that surround a nail. The inflammation can be from bacterial or fungal infection, and is not contagious. It usually occurs on the hands and less often on the feet.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Bacterial paronychia:

- Pain or tenderness, redness, warmth, and swelling of tissue adjacent to the fingernail.
- Central whitish area produced by pus.

Fungal paronychia:

- Redness and swelling around the fingernail.
- No pain, warmth, itching, or pus.

CAUSES

- Bacterial paronychia is preceded by injury, such as a torn hangnail. The infecting bacteria are usually *Staphylococcus*.
- Fungal paronychia is caused by a fungus or yeast infection.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Injury around the fingernail.
- Work exposure to constant wetness (dishwashers, bartenders, housewives).
- Diabetes.
- Nail biting or finger sucking.
- Artificial nails.
- Shoes that bind or pinch the toes.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Protect hands from wetness.
- Leave hangnails alone.
- Avoid fingertip injury.
- Avoid tight shoes.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Bacterial paronychia is curable with treatment in 2 weeks.
- Fungal paronychia is chronic and may require 6 months to heal.
- Recurrence is common with both forms.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

If untreated, may permanently damage the fingernail and nail bed. Rarely, the infection may enter bone or bloodstream.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do an exam of the affected nail. Medical studies, such as a culture of the discharge, may be done to identify the germ.

- Treatment involves avoiding factors that may be the cause, self-care, and drug therapy.
- Sometimes part, or all, of a toenail may need to be removed.
- Use warm-water soaks several times a day.
- If an abscess (pus-filled area) occurs, it may require incision (cutting) and drainage.
- Wear heavy-duty vinyl gloves to prevent contact with irritating substances, such as water, soap, detergent, metal scrubbing pads, scouring pads, scouring powder, and other chemicals.
- Dry the insides of gloves after use. Discard gloves if they develop a hole. A glove with a hole harms the hand more than not wearing a glove.
- Wear vinyl gloves when you peel or squeeze lemons, oranges, grapefruit, tomatoes, or potatoes.
- Wear leather or heavy-duty fabric gloves for housework or gardening.
- Avoid contact with irritating chemicals, such as paint, paint thinner, turpentine, and polish for cars, floors, shoes, furniture, or metal.
- Use lukewarm water and very little mild soap to shower or bathe. All soaps are irritating. Expensive soaps offer no more protection against irritation than less-expensive ones.

MEDICATIONS

- For minor pain, you may use nonprescription drugs, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.
- Antibiotics may be prescribed for bacterial infection.
- Topical antifungals and topical steroids may be prescribed for fungal infection.

ACTIVITY

No limits.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of paronychia.
- Pain is not helped by treatment.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page