



Ingrowing toenail

Patient information leaflet



GIG
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WALES



Common Ailments Service

Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your or your child's condition.

Ingrowing (or ingrown) toenails are toenails that have grown into the skin of the toe. The skin around the nail may become red, swollen and sore. Any toe can be affected but it is usually the big toe.



Bacteria may infect the skin, making it more swollen and painful. The toe may throb and have yellow or green fluid (pus) coming out of it.

Ingrowing toenails often affect teenagers and young adults but they can develop in anyone.



Treatment and Prevention

If the skin around your nail is only slightly red and sore and there is no pus, you could try to stop the skin from growing over the edge of the nail.

Follow these instructions:

1. Soak your toe in water for 10 minutes to make the skin softer.
2. Use a cotton wool bud to push the skin down and away from the nail. Start at the bottom of the nail and work upwards to the end (the part of the nail that you cut).
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 each day for a few weeks.
4. As the end of your nail grows forward, push a tiny piece of cotton wool or dental floss under it. This will help the nail to grow over the skin, not into it. Change the cotton wool or dental floss each time you soak your foot.
5. Do not cut the nail until it has grown beyond the end of your toe.

To **stop your toenail becoming ingrown** again:

- always cut your nails instead of tearing them off
- cut your nails straight across and not too short
- wear comfortable shoes and socks with plenty of space around the toes
- keep your feet clean and dry
- let the air get to your toes when you can
- try not to let your feet get sweaty

If you cannot feel or see your feet well, see a podiatrist to have your toenails trimmed.



Treatment and Prevention

Medicines that can help

These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for you or your child.

Paracetamol may help with the pain.

Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.

If you are concerned about any side effects from a treatment, report it to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also report side effects on the Yellow Card [app](#) or [website](#).



When to Get Help

Contact your GP if you have an ingrowing toenail and:

- you have diabetes
- you have neuropathy (a condition affecting the nerves or feeling in your feet)
- you have a weakened immune system, for example from cancer treatment or steroid therapy
- you have treated your toe for 7 days, but it is not getting better, or is worse
- your toenail has changed colour and may be thicker in parts with pieces falling off
- you have signs of an infection that may need antibiotics

Signs of an **infection** that may need treatment with antibiotics include:

- a high temperature – you may feel hot or shivery
- hot, red, swollen and painful skin around your toenail
- pus coming out of your toe
- your toenail changing colour, getting thicker, or breaking

If you are worried that your or your child's condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.



More information

For more information on ingrowing toenails or a medicine, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS 111 Wales: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/i/article/ingrowntoenail>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/foot-care/ingrowing-toenails-ingrown-toenails>

Medicines A-Z: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

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