

## What is it?

Ingrown toenails occur when your toenail grows into the skin of the toe. They are most common in young adults and often occur in the big toe, though they can impact any toe. Ingrown toenails can be painful and affect your daily life. They may also cause swelling and redness. An ingrown toenail can be caused by:

- Poor cutting technique
- Nail shape, which often runs in families
- Hyperhidrosis, which is excess sweating not always caused by heat or exercise
- Trauma
- Footwear

Ingrown toenails can be treated at home by soaking your feet in warm water. If the toenail is infected, you may need antibiotics. Your GP will help you find the cause of your ingrown toenail so you can prevent it from coming back again.

## What will my GP do now?

Your GP may give you pain relief and show you how to maintain good foot hygiene and skin care. They may also:

- Treat signs of infection with antibiotics
- Refer you to a podiatrist
- Remove the nail spike with nail clippers or a scalpel

Your GP may see you again in a few weeks to make sure the toenail is healing well.

## What can I do?

Follow your GP's advice about treatment and keeping good foot hygiene. Tips include:

- Cut the nail straight across, not short at the corners
- Rinse the toe with saline daily
- Apply antiseptic cream
- Keep the foot dry
- Soak the toe in warm water for 10 minutes each day, then gently pull the skin from the nail edge
- Consider toe taping
- Consider using a small piece of cotton wool or dental floss under the corner of the nail to encourage the nail to grow over the skin

Keep an eye on your symptoms, and see your GP if you notice pain or swelling.

## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How long will my toenail take to heal?*
- What pain relief medication can I take?*
- What are the signs of infection to look for?*



## What supports are available?

If you notice the ingrown toenail is not getting better or is getting worse, your GP can refer you to a private foot specialist (podiatrist) or physiotherapist. Ask your GP about the options.

## Where can I learn more?

- **PatientInfo** – Ingrowing Toenails: [patient.info](https://patient.info)