

Wedge incision of an ingrowing toenail

Day Surgery Unit



Patient information leaflet

What is an ingrowing toenail?

This problem occurs when the toenail grows into the skin at the sides of the toe. This leads to swelling, severe tenderness, and sometimes infection.

What causes it?

Ingrowing toenails often run in families. However, ingrowing toenails may be caused by:

- Incorrect trimming of the nail – the toenail should be cut straight across.
- Poor fitting footwear – this can make the problem worse.
- Injury.

What does surgery involve?

The toenail and the skin surrounding it are numbed with a local anaesthetic. Then the side edge of the nail is removed, including the part that has grown in.

The toe is then dressed and bandaged.

The nail will slowly grow through at the same width, hopefully without digging in.

Are there any risks and possible complications?

Complications of toenail surgery are rare, but could include the following:

- **Bleeding** – The operation site may bleed through the bandage. This can happen while you are still in the Day Surgery Unit. If this occurs, additional dressings will be applied.

If bleeding occurs when at home, raise the foot and place gentle pressure on the toe over the top of the dressing for 15-20 minutes. If you are unable to stop the bleeding please contact the Day Surgery Unit during normal opening hours or attend your nearest A&E department.

- **Infection** – If your toe becomes very red and swollen, very tender or starts producing a pus-like discharge, you may have an infection. See your GP, who can provide antibiotics to treat the infection, if required.
- **Recurrence** – There is a chance that even after surgery your ingrowing toenail may return. You can help prevent this by cutting your toenails properly and wearing well-fitting shoes. Your chiropodist can give good advice regarding the prevention of further problems.

Are there alternative treatments available?

Your GP or Chiropodist can often suggest alternative treatments for mild cases. Do not attempt to treat the problem yourself, as pain and infection may result. Surgery is usually recommended if the problem is severe or returns after treatment.

If the nail digs in again after wedge re-section, your surgeon may recommend permanently narrowing the nail, either by applying phenol to the base of the nail or by excising the root of the nail.

Will the procedure hurt?

The local anaesthetic will keep your foot numb for a few hours. However when the local anaesthetic wears off your foot may become very tender.

You will be provided with painkillers to take home with you. These painkillers will carry a prescription charge unless you are exempt (please check your status with Pharmacy).

It is advised that you take your first dose of painkillers before the local anaesthetic wears off.

When are the dressing and stitches removed?

The dressing on the toe will require changing in two or three days' time. The practice nurse at your GP surgery can do this for you. The nursing staff at the Day Surgery Unit will give you a letter to show your practice nurse so that she knows what treatment is required.

Keep your bandage clean and dry. You will be provided with a soft overshoe to protect the bandage when you walk.

If you have stitches your nurse will tell you when they can be removed.

Elevation and walking

For the next couple of days, rest your foot up as much as possible, to help reduce pain and swelling.

You will be able to walk on your foot, initially putting weight through the heel only.

You may resume normal activities once your toe has healed.

Work and driving

Driving should be avoided until you can comfortably operate the pedals and perform an emergency stop.

If you have had a general anaesthetic, you must not drive for 24 hours following your surgery.

You may go back work once you can perform your job comfortably.

Reference source

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/ingrown-toenail/pages/introduction.aspx

Contact details

If you require further advice, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Day Surgery Unit

Telephone: 01483 406783 (Monday–Friday, 8am–6pm)

Surgical Short Stay Unit

Telephone: 01483 406828

Out of hours advice

Telephone: Call 111 (formerly NHS Direct)

Website: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

Past review date: May 2018

Future review date: May 2021

Author: Laura Ceurstemont & Carole Richens

PIN180508–1517

