

Ingrown Toenails

Explanation of Diagnosis

An **ingrown toenail** occurs when the **edge of the toenail grows into the surrounding skin**, causing **pain, redness, swelling, and possible infection**. It commonly affects the **big toe** and is caused by **improper nail trimming, tight shoes, injury, or genetics**. If left untreated, it can lead to **infection or an abscess requiring medical treatment**.

Specific Work Modifications

- **Avoid prolonged standing or walking**, especially if there is pain or swelling.
- **Wear wide, breathable shoes** to prevent pressure on the affected toe.
- **Use cushioned insoles** to reduce foot strain.
- **Take sitting breaks** if standing for long periods.
- **If infected, consider light-duty work** to minimize weight-bearing stress.

Specific Activity Modifications

- **Avoid tight or restrictive footwear** during activities (e.g., running shoes with a wide toe box).
- **Modify workouts** by switching to **low-impact exercises** such as cycling or swimming.
- **Avoid barefoot activities** (e.g., martial arts, yoga on hard surfaces) to prevent further irritation.
- **Do not pick or forcefully trim the nail**, as this can worsen the condition.

Recommended Supplements

- **Vitamin C (500 mg daily)** - Supports skin healing and reduces infection risk.
- **Zinc (30 mg daily)** - Helps with wound healing.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids (1000 mg daily)** - Reduces inflammation and swelling.
- **Probiotics (10-20 billion CFU daily)** - Supports immune function to fight infection.
- **Turmeric (500 mg twice daily)** - Natural anti-inflammatory.

Recommended Nutrition and Hydration

Diet Recommendations:

- **Anti-inflammatory foods:** Leafy greens, berries, nuts, and fatty fish (salmon).
- **Immune-boosting foods:** Citrus fruits, garlic, yogurt (probiotics), and almonds.
- **Protein-rich foods:** Chicken, eggs, lentils, and dairy to support skin healing.

- **Limit processed foods, excess sugar, and alcohol**, which can worsen inflammation.

Hydration Tips:

- **Drink at least 2-3 liters of water daily** to support skin healing.
- **Limit caffeine and alcohol**, which can dehydrate tissues and slow recovery.

Home Treatment & Prevention

Perform **daily foot care** to relieve pain and prevent infection:

1. **Soak Feet in Warm Salt Water (15-20 min, 2-3 times daily)**
 - Use **Epsom salt (1-2 tablespoons per quart of warm water)** to reduce swelling and soften the nail.
2. **Gently Lift the Nail Edge (if possible)**
 - After soaking, use a **clean cotton ball or dental floss** to gently lift the nail edge and prevent further growth into the skin.
3. **Apply Antibiotic Ointment**
 - Use **bacitracin or Neosporin** and cover with a **loose bandage** to prevent infection.
4. **Wear Open-Toed or Wide-Toe Box Shoes**
 - Avoid tight-fitting shoes until pain and swelling resolve.
5. **Trim Nails Properly**
 - Cut nails **straight across (not rounded)** to prevent future ingrowth.
 - Avoid cutting nails **too short**.
6. **Monitor for Signs of Infection**
 - Redness, pus, worsening pain, or fever may indicate infection requiring **medical attention**.

When to Seek Medical Care

- **Severe pain or spreading infection** (pus, redness spreading up the toe).
- **No improvement with home care after 5-7 days**.
- **Recurring ingrown toenails**, which may require a minor procedure to remove part of the nail.

Helpful Books

1. *"Every Woman's Guide to Foot Pain Relief: The New Science of Healthy Feet"* - Katy Bowman
2. *"Fixing Your Feet: Injury Prevention and Treatment for Athletes"* - John Vonhof

Click [here](#) for more orthopedic patient information.

Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.