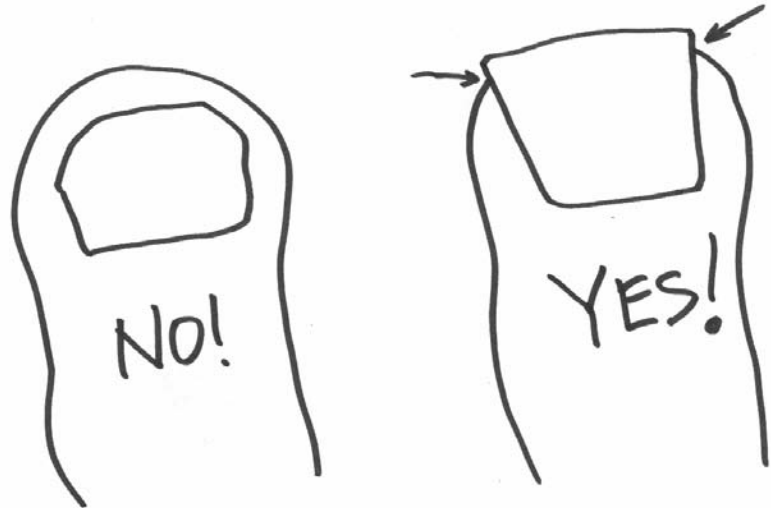


# INGROWN TOENAILS

This problem has 2 contributing factors: 1) cutting the nail too short, 2) frequently mini-trauma caused by shoes that are too tight. The latter of course you may help by checking your shoes, seeing if they are pinching your toes tightly and if they are, get rid of those shoes or at least stop wearing those shoes until the problem is better.

The problem of cutting toenails too short is very frequent and it's kind of difficult to show diagrams on proper toenail cutting. The most important part about cutting your nails is that the edges of the nails should always get all the way through the skin. You should never cut below the skin. When you cut below the skin, the nail as it grows out will cut through the skin like a knife. This pushing through the skin will then cause irritation, redness and eventually pus at the corner of the nail. This irritation is what we call inflammation, not infection. The difference is, primarily, that with inflammation there is a substance that is irritating the skin, which once removed, will go away. On the other hand, infection consists of a bacteria being present that is not normally there, causing destruction of the skin and surrounding area.



Antibiotics may help if the irritation has allowed bacteria to come into the wound, but most causes of ingrown toenail will only get better once the portion of the nail that is irritating the skin is removed. Again, this nail grows out and can act like a knife cutting through the skin, and obviously that is irritating to the toe, particularly if it's getting crushed into the shoe that doesn't quite fit right.

If you have just a tiny bit of irritation you might be able to treat it with minimal handling and possibly even a tiny bit of cotton under the nail to keep it from irritating as it grows out. If it is more severe, we will cut a slice of nail off. Once the offending piece of nail is removed, the nail will gain begin to grow out and there may be a little hook of nail that may catch on the skin. We try to make that hook as smooth as possible, and if you wear the proper shoes hopefully that nail will grow all the way out without causing so much irritation this time.

It is important not to manipulate this too much, not to pick at it with scissors, or toothpicks or whatever, so that the nail can grow out. It may get a little red now and then but just treat it gently, with soap and water and make sure that your shoes are not crushing it at those times, and try and let the nail grow out. It is a long process, the nail takes approximately 3-6 months to grow out, but if you are very patient and treat your toe well the nail will grow out so that you can cut it properly, above the skin.

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