

# Ingrowing toenail

## What is an ingrowing toenail?

An ingrown toenail is a common disorder and mostly affects the big toe. The nail of the affected toe digs into the skin of the big toe and causes pain. This can be very painful. In addition to pain, it may also lead to infection which may need one or more courses of antibiotics. It is more common in younger people

## What causes the toenail to ingrow?

It can be spontaneous with no underlying cause. Poorly fitting/tight shoes or nail injury may cause the toenail to dig into skin.

## How is ingrowing toenail treated?

Regular cleaning of the affected toenail and surrounding skin will help in early or mild cases. If they are treated early they can be treated very simply by removing the offending spike of nail. At this point education can be given on the appropriate ways to trim the nails without recurrence.

## What does the operation involve?

Surgery will only be recommended if your toenail causes considerable pain and non-surgical treatments have failed. One of the following operations will be recommended:

Complete avulsion or partial (wedge) resection of the toe nail

Exact operation will be decided by your surgeon after discussing with you

In most cases surgery is performed by numbing the toe (Local anaesthesia)

It is performed as a day case procedure. The surgeon may decide to use a chemical on the nail bed (phenol) to reduce the risk of recurrence.

## What happens after the procedure?

Almost all patients go home on the day of the operation

Your blood pressure and pulse will be monitored

Your foot and toes will be observed for colour, warmth and sensation and bleeding

Your foot will be in a bulky bandage

Pain killers will be needed for a few days after the operation

You will be given a surgical/hard soled shoe

You will be allowed to walk as able in the shoe

Once you are comfortable and have recovered from the procedure you will be allowed to go home

Dressing can be removed in 10 to 12 days from the time of the operation. This is usually done at your GP practice or a nurse led clinic in the hospital.

In most cases a follow up appointment with your consultant is not needed

## What is the aftercare following surgery?

Expect some swelling of your foot. While you are recovering, you will need to elevate your foot to reduce the swelling. Keep your dressing clean and dry

If you have had operation on the left foot you will be able to drive an automatic car a few days after the operation. If you have had operation on the right foot you will be able to drive couple of weeks after the operation.

**What are the benefits of having surgery?**

The main benefit of surgery is pain relief. Operation also helps in preventing infections.

**What are the risks?**

The operation is generally very safe with a low rate of complications. Complications of the operation are:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Swelling
- Recurrence (most common complication)
- Numbness
- Pain