



TOENAIL MINOR SURGERY HANDBOOK

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Important Information

- Do not drive until the local anaesthetic has worn off.
- Do not have another local anaesthetic for 24 hours before or after this appointment.
- If possible, have a responsible adult escort you home after your surgery.
- Please bring footwear that you will be able to fit over your dressings when you come for your appointment.

Introduction

We have written this leaflet to explain about your toenail surgery. We hope you find it useful.

Why do I need surgery?

You may need to have a partial or total toenail avulsion (avulsion means removal) to cure painful conditions such as:

- Infecting ingrowing toenails.
- Thickened and/or distorted toenails.
- Toenails affected by a fungal infection.
- Toenails that are curving into your flesh (known as involuted or incurved toenails).

What kind of surgery will I have?

A partial nail avulsion is often done when one or both sides of the nail are ingrown. This method leaves most of the nail in place, only removing the part of the nail that is causing problems.

A total nail avulsion is the complete removal of the toenail where the nail is extremely curved, thickened or damaged. This method results in permanent loss of the whole nail.

Your GP will discuss this with you which type of avulsion is more appropriate for you.

Is any preparation needed?

On the day of the surgery, eat normally, and take your prescribed medication unless advised otherwise. You may also bring a friend or relative with you for company.

Will it hurt?

Both total and partial avulsions are done using local anaesthetic which numbs the area. The local anaesthetic is injected into the base of the toe(s) to be treated.

As with any injection, this can be uncomfortable, but it does not take long. Once the local anaesthetic is working the procedure is pain-free. We will not start the procedure until you are happy the area is numb. You will be able to feel movement, but no pain.

Are there any risks involved?

As with any minor operation, there are a few potential risks:

- Infection, which means healing may take longer.
- Adverse reaction to the local anaesthetic (this is very rare).
- The chemical used to stop the nail from growing back is very strong and may cause the surrounding skin to blister.

What happens during the procedure?

The procedure will be fully explained to you before treatment begins and we will ask you to sign a consent form. Signing the form shows that you understand and agree to the procedure.

Your foot will then be cleaned with a disinfectant and you will have two injections of local anaesthetic at the base of the toe(s) to be treated.

Your foot will be cleaned again with disinfectant and a tourniquet (tight bandage) will be applied to remove the blood from your toe(s) and prevent bleeding during the operation.

The nail or section of nail will be removed and a chemical (Phenol) will be applied to the area to prevent regrowth. This also acts as a painkiller.

The tourniquet will be removed and a bulky antiseptic dressing applied to prevent bleeding.

How long does it take?

The total appointment time takes 45 to 60 minutes. This includes time for all the paperwork to be completed, for the local anaesthetic to work, and for you to relax. The procedure itself takes only five to 10 minutes.

What happens after the surgery?

We will give you a leaflet on how to look after your dressing. You will get a Nurse appointment usually one to three days after your surgery for a dressing change.

Will I be able to get my shoes on afterwards?

This is not a problem, however, I may help to bring slippers or footwear that has plenty of room for your toes with you – trainers are usually best.

Will I be able to walk afterwards?

Yes, you will be able to walk normally after the procedure, although we do advise that you arrange to get home by car or taxi, and that you rest with your leg up for the rest of the day.

Will I be able to drive home myself?

We recommend that you do not drive home. If you are involved in an accident your motor insurance may not cover you if you drive while your toe is still numb. Please check with your insurance company if you are unsure.

Will it hurt when the anaesthetic wears off?

Occasionally people have had some pain as the local anaesthetic wears off. If this happens it can be relieved by sitting with your feet up, and if necessary, taking some pain relief.

The anaesthetic usually wears off after two hours. It is unusual for the toe to be very uncomfortable although there have been cases of severe discomfort. If you do have any discomfort, you can take a painkiller, but avoid anything with Aspirin (or any alcohol) as this may make the wound bleed. When taking painkillers, always follow the instructions on the bottle/packet.

Will it bleed a lot?

Heavy bleeding after this type of surgery is unusual if you follow the advice of rest. There can be slight bleeding which your dressing will usually absorb. If you do have heavy bleeding, contact your GP, as soon as possible.

Where do I get more dressings from?

After your first follow-up dressing with the Nurse, you will need to change your own dressings.

The dressing materials we recommend are:

- Tubegauz® (size 12) – not available on prescription.
- Adhesive tape (Micropore) – not available on prescription.
- Melolin® dressings 5 cm. x 5 cm.
- Mepitel dressings 5 cm. x 7 cm.

Your GP will give you a prescription for the dressings but you must buy the Tubegauz® and tape.

Will I be able to do my everyday activities?

Everyday things like walking are fine, as long as you wear appropriate footwear, such as sandals or wide shoes/trainers.

Swimming, and any activities in which you could get your foot trodden on, are best left until completely healed.

When can I go back to work/school?

You will normally be able to return to work/school the next day. Some people find a 24-hour rest beneficial. Avoid any strenuous physical activity until your wound is healed.

How long will it take to heal?

Partial nail avulsions take an average of six weeks to heal. Total nail avulsions can take eight weeks or longer to heal. However, some people will heal quicker than others. There are many factors to consider, such as if you smoke or if you have poor circulation (these can mean you take longer to heal).

How will it look when it is healed?

After healing following a partial nail avulsion, the nail will be normal in appearance, and a little smaller. The incurved nail border is gone, leaving a toenail unlikely to in-grow again.

After a total nail avulsion, the body generates a hardened skin cover over the sensitive nail bed. When this covering has developed fully, normal activities may be undertaken, and you can also use nail polish in this area.