

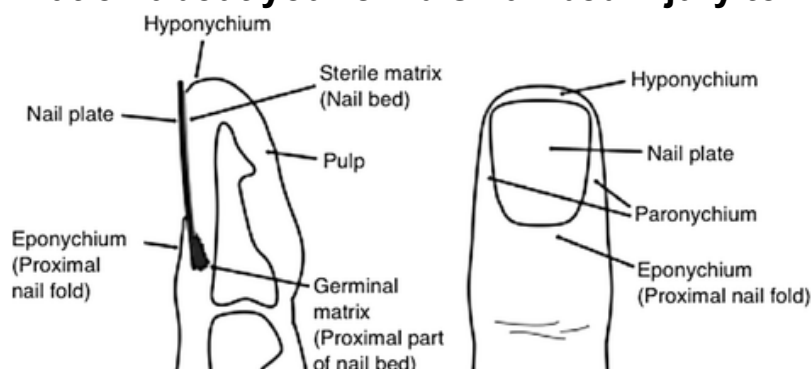
Nail bed or fingertip injury

Information for patients and parents/carers

This leaflet will offer more information about your child's nail bed injury to their finger(s) or toe(s).

What is a nail bed injury?

A nail bed injury is a very common childhood injury which happens when a fingertip or toe gets crushed or trapped between or by a heavy object.



The nail bed sits between the fingernail or toenail and the bone, helping the nail grow normally and securing the nail plate to the fingertip or toe.

Even if there is no obvious damage to the nail, there could be damage to the nail bed underneath. Any unrepaired damage could cause the nail to grow with ridges or be deformed.

As well as injury to the nail bed, there may also be a laceration to the fingertip and sometimes a small chip or fracture in the bone, known as a tuft fracture. These fractures often don't need any treatment other than cleaning as the bone will heal itself.

Treatments

Your child will be assessed by a doctor who will decide whether surgery or dressings is the best treatment.

Your child may need a short operation to repair the nail bed; this is normally carried out under general anaesthetic. The anaesthetist will speak to you and your child before the operation and answer any questions you may have.

During surgery your child's nail may be removed, cleaned and possibly replaced as a protective splint secured with dissolvable stitches, or the surgeon may use some foil as a splint instead. The wound will then be dressed with either a single finger/toe dressing or a whole hand or "boxing glove" dressing.

Pain

It is recommended that you give your child painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen at regular intervals for the first few days. You can also reduce the pain and any swelling by keeping your child's hand/foot elevated as much as possible.

Home care

It is important to encourage your child to rest for the first few days, to try and stop them from knocking or banging the wound and causing bleeding and more pain. Also avoid any messy play. It is very important that the dressing remains as clean and dry as possible until your child is reviewed in the Plastic Dressings Clinic. Wet dressings can delay healing and increase the risk of infection.

If the dressing gets wet or slips off, please attend A&E so it can be replaced.

It is important to look out for any signs of infection in the wound. If your child develops any of the following symptoms, please attend A&E straight away:

- Increase in pain
- Feeling unwell in themselves
- Fever (temperature above 37.5 degrees)
- An offensive smell or redness near the dressing.

Follow up

You will be given an appointment for your child to have their dressing removed and their wound looked at by a nurse. Please give your child some painkillers at home at least one hour before your appointment. The appointment will be in the Plastic Dressings Clinic (OPD 12) upstairs on 1st floor of outpatients by the Therapies Department. Please check in at reception when you arrive.

The nurse will see if the wound has healed enough for your child to no longer need a dressing and be able to get the area wet. If the wound is not fully healed, your child will have a similar or smaller dressing put on and you will either be told to change the dressing at home or to come for a further appointment at the clinic. Your child's finger/toe may still look swollen, bruised and have some dried blood around the end after the dressing is removed. This is normal and is nothing to worry about. If your child has a fracture, they will need to stay in a padded dressing for a further week to allow this to heal.

Once the fingertip/toe is fully healed your child can get back to normal activities including baths and swimming. We also encourage using an oil-based moisturiser to help keep the scar tissue soft. A new nail can take approximately six months to grow back fully and there may be a ridge in the new nail.

Contact Us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's nail bed injury, wound or dressing please contact the ward or A&E they were discharged from:

A&E: 0131 312 0007 / 0008

Crichton: 0131 312 0970

For follow up appointments in the plastic dressing's clinic please call 0131 312 0107.