

Nail bed injuries and nail bed repairs in children

This leaflet contains information about nail bed injuries in children and how these are treated in Evelina London Children's Hospital. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the nurse or doctor looking after your child.

What causes nail bed injuries?

The nail bed is the piece of skin directly below the fingernail. The nail is surrounded by soft tissue which supports, surrounds and protects the body. Soft tissue includes skin, muscle, blood vessels etc. Nail bed injuries are very common amongst younger children and represent the majority of hand trauma cases in children.

Many injuries result from crushing by heavy objects, such as getting fingertips caught in doors. Over 50% (one in two cases) are associated with a fracture of the distal phalanx (the fingertip bones), which is called a tuft fracture. This means that small fragments have chipped off the edge of the bone.

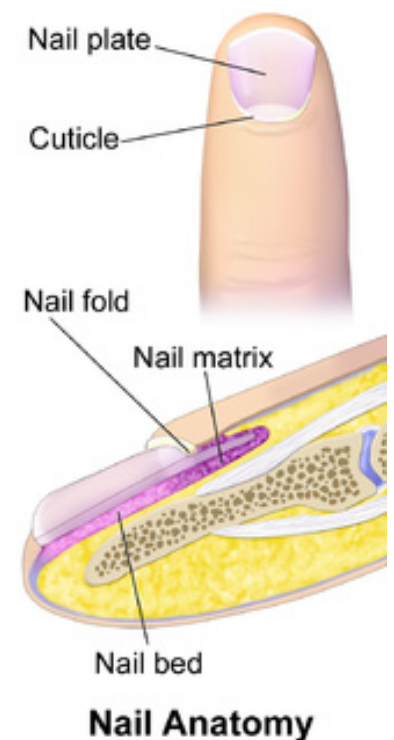
A nail bed and soft tissue repair is usually sufficient in treating these and they usually heal within six to eight weeks.

What are the main benefits of nail bed repairs?

The main benefits include reduction in pain, infection and prevention of a nail deformity. However, despite treatment, complications cannot be eliminated completely.

What are the risks?

Every procedure performed under general anaesthetic carries a small risk of possible complications, such as infection or reaction to anaesthetic. The main complications associated with nail bed repairs include infection, bleeding, haematoma (localised collection of blood), scarring, absent or abnormal growth of nail, pain and cold intolerance of the finger/toe.



Blausen.com staff, "Blausen gallery 2014", *Wikiversity Journal of Medicine*.
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Consent – asking for your consent

We want to involve you in decisions about your child's care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for your child.

What will happen prior to the surgery?

Your child will be assessed by the paediatric (children's) plastic surgery team and an informed decision will be made with you and your child in terms of treatment options. You will then be asked to sign the consent form.

If your child is older and is able to fully understand what this treatment involves, then these procedures can be performed under local anaesthetic. If your child is having general anaesthetic you will be allowed to accompany your child into the anaesthetic room and stay with them until they are asleep.

General anaesthetic for children

General anaesthetic is medicine that is used to make sure a person is asleep and does not feel any pain during an operation. Specially trained doctors, called anaesthetists, care for all patients having an anaesthetic. All children having an operation will be cared for by specialised paediatric anaesthetists who have been specifically trained to give anaesthetics to children.

If you would like more information please ask for the leaflet, **Your child's general anaesthetic**.

Fasting instructions

Please do not let your child eat or drink anything (except non-fizzy water) for six hours before their surgery. This means that they cannot suck on sweets or chew gum. They are allowed to drink water up to two hours before their surgery. **If they continue to eat or drink after this, their surgery will be cancelled.**

When will my child have surgery?

We have an allocated afternoon theatre list for children's plastic surgery patients four times a week. This means that the surgery may not go ahead on the same day of your visit to the emergency department and you may have to return for an admission on a different day. If you are returning on a different day, you will be admitted to one of our children's wards – Beach, Snow Fox, Mountain, or Savannah. An anaesthetic review will be undertaken on the ward and you will have the opportunity to ask further questions.

Over the weekend your child may be placed on a priority theatre list. This list is used by other specialities and the order of the list is based on medical urgency. Despite our best efforts, at times, these lists are subjected to late cancellations.

What happens during the surgery?

The plastic surgeon will examine the affected finger and its structure. While your child is asleep, the nail will be partially or fully removed and the area cleaned. The nail bed (as well as any tearing of soft tissue) will be then repaired using fine dissolvable stitches. A sterile dressing will be applied to the affected area.

What happens after surgery?

If the surgery is done under local anaesthetic, you and your child can usually leave the ward within two hours, after your discharge letter has been done and once your discharge medication is ready for collection.

If the surgery is done under general anaesthetic, your child will be taken to the recovery area after surgery. You will be called to join them when your child is waking up from the anaesthetic. Your child will then return to the ward where nurses will carry out post-operative observations. Your child's pain will be assessed and appropriate analgesia (pain relief) given as necessary. Antibiotics that are taken by mouth may also be prescribed for the next five to seven days. You and your child will need to remain on the ward for minimum of four hours after the surgery.

It is advisable to keep the hand raised as much as possible to reduce any swelling and to reduce pain to the area. Your child will be allowed to eat and drink.

Your child will not usually be required to stay overnight unless the procedure is performed late in the evening.

What to do at home

Keep the dressing dry and clean until it is reviewed by your GP or reviewed in a dressing clinic (within one week to 10 days after surgery). Keep the hand raised as much as possible, especially in the first 48 hours after the surgery. You can give regular paracetamol to your child and give them ibuprofen (if normally allowed and not allergic to it) if the pain persists. Ensure that you follow the recommended dosage for your child's age as instructed on the label.

When to seek medical attention from our team

- If your child is in pain that is not well controlled by paracetamol or ibuprofen.
- If the wound is bleeding through the dressing.
- If there is a strong odour coming from the wound.
- If your child has a high temperature above 37.7C.
- If the dressing becomes wet or if it has been removed by your child, please call the clinical nurse specialist (CNS) on **t: 07747 204489**, 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday. Outside of those hours, call the plastic surgery doctors on **t: 020 7188 7188**, ask for bleep desk, and input bleep 0155.

Appointment in the dressing clinic

You will be given a follow up appointment to have the dressing removed and the wound checked seven to 10 days after the operation. Sometimes the surgeon may ask you to attend your GP practice instead. It is advisable to give your child a dose of paracetamol 30 minutes prior your child's dressing clinic appointment. You may find that the finger appears swollen and the surrounding tissue has not fully healed. This usually takes up to four to six weeks to settle down. If the wound has healed sufficiently, the area can be left with no dressing. If the wound has not healed completely, the dressing will be replaced.

A new nail can take up to four to six months to regrow fully.

Contact us

If you are worried, please contact the CNS for paediatric plastic surgery via the switchboard on **t:** 020 7188 7188, bleep 3040, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, or on mobile, **t:** 07747 204 489. Out of hours, ring the ward your child stayed on: Beach **t:** 020 7188 8844; Mountain **t:** 020 7188 8852; Savannah **t:** 020 7188 5941; or Snow Fox **t:** 020 7188 4670.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

t: 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm **e:** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111 **w:** 111.nhs.uk

NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

Was this leaflet useful?

We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets, or **e:** patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk

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