

Nail bed injuries and repairs

This leaflet gives information about nail bed injuries, and how they are treated at Evelina London Children's Hospital. If you have any questions or concerns, please 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 nail bed. Soft tissue includes skin, muscle and blood vessels. Nail bed injuries are very common in younger children. Most hand-trauma cases in children are caused by nail bed injuries.

Many injuries are caused by crushing from heavy objects, such as getting fingertips caught in doors. Over half of these injuries are associated with a fracture of 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 enough to treat these problems, and they usually heal in 6 to 8 weeks.

Benefits of nail bed repair surgery

The main benefits include less pain, less chance of infection, and prevention of a nail deformity.

Risks of nail bed repair surgery

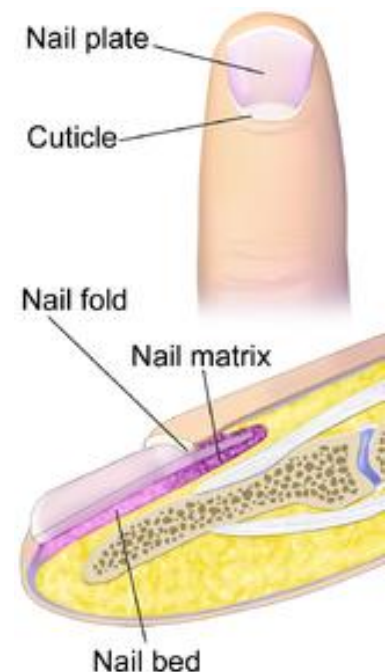
Every procedure done under general anaesthetic, has a small risk of possible complications, such as infection or a reaction to anaesthetic. The main complications with nail bed repairs include:

- infection
- bleeding
- haematoma (a collection of blood at the injury site)
- scarring
- a nail that does not grow, or abnormal growth of nail
- pain and cold intolerance of the finger or toe

Permission (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 understand what the treatment involves, and agree for your child to have it.

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



Nail Anatomy

Blaesen.com staff, "Blaesen gallery 2014", *Wikiversity Journal of Medicine*.
DOI:10.15347/wjm/2004.010ISSN
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Before your child's surgery

Your child will be assessed by the children's plastic surgery team and a decision will be made with you and your child about their treatment options. You will be asked to sign a consent form.

If your child is older and can fully understand what this treatment involves, it can be done under local anaesthetic.

If your child is having general anaesthetic, you can go with 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 someone is asleep and does not feel anything during surgery. Specially trained doctors, called anaesthetists, care for all patients having an anaesthetic. Our anaesthetists have been trained to give anaesthetics to children.

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

Fasting (not eating or drinking) instructions

Do not let your child eat or drink anything (except non-fizzy water) for 6 hours before their surgery. This means that they cannot suck on sweets or chew gum. They are allowed to drink water up to 1 hour before their surgery. **If they continue to eat or drink after this, their surgery will be cancelled.**

When your child will have surgery

Depending on availability, the surgery might not go ahead on the same day as your visit to the emergency department. If this is the case, you might have to come back 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, Savannah, or the children's short-stay unit. An anaesthetic review will be done on the ward, and you will have the opportunity to ask further questions.

Over the weekend your child might be placed on a priority theatre list. This list is used by other departments, and the order of the list is based on medical urgency. Sometimes, these lists are subjected to late cancellations.

During your child's surgery

The plastic surgeon will look at the affected finger and its structure. Either part of the nail, or all of it, will be 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.

After your child's surgery

Oral (by mouth) antibiotics might be prescribed for the next 5 to 7 days. You and your child will need to stay on the ward for at least 4 hours after the surgery.

Your child should keep their hand raised as much as possible, to reduce any swelling and pain. Your child will be allowed to eat and drink.

If the surgery is done late in the evening, your child will need to stay overnight. If the surgery is done earlier, your child can usually go home on the same day.

Under local anaesthetic

If the surgery is done under local anaesthetic, you and your child can usually leave the ward within 2 hours, after your discharge letter has been done and any discharge medicines are ready for collection.

Under general anaesthetic

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 they are waking up from the anaesthetic. Your child will return to the ward and nurses will monitor them. Your child's pain will be assessed and they'll be given painkillers where needed.

What to do at home

Keep the dressing dry and clean until it is reviewed by your GP, or reviewed in our dressing clinic (in 7 to 10 days after surgery). Keep the hand raised as much as possible, especially in the first 48 hours after 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. Make sure that you follow the recommended amount (dose) 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 does not get better with paracetamol or ibuprofen.
- If the wound is bleeding through the dressing.
- If there is a strong smell (odour) coming from the wound.
- If your child has a fever (high temperature).

If the dressing becomes wet or if it has been removed by your child, please call the clinical nurse specialist (CNS), **phone** 07747 204489, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Outside of those hours, please call the ward your child was on:

- Beach ward, **phone** 020 7188 8844
- Mountain ward, **phone** 020 7188 8845
- Savannah ward, **phone** 020 7188 8852
- Snow Fox ward, **phone** 020 7188 4670
- Short stay unit, **phone** 020 7188 7188 extension 56105

Appointment in the dressing clinic

You will be given a follow-up appointment to have the dressing removed and the wound checked 7 to 10 days after the operation. This will be in our dressing clinic, or the surgeon might ask you to go to your child's GP instead.

It is advisable to give your child a dose of paracetamol 30 minutes before their dressing clinic appointment. The finger might look swollen, and the surrounding tissue might not have fully healed. This usually takes up to 4 to 6 weeks to settle down. If the wound has healed, 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 4 to 6 months to grow fully.

Contact us

If you are worried, please contact the plastic surgery CNS. Call switchboard, **phone** 020 7188 7188, and ask for the bleep desk. Ask for bleep 3040 and wait for a response. This will connect you to the CNS directly, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, or you can try their **mobile** 07747 204 489.

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For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **web** 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, **phone** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm **email** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone** 020 7188 8801 **email** pals@gstt.nhs.uk. To make a complaint contact the resolution department **phone** 020 7188 3514 **email** 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 contact the department your appointment is with.

NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day, **phone** 111 **web** www.111.nhs.uk

NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing, **web** www.nhs.uk



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