



Nail Changes

Changes to finger and toe nails is common with some medications including some types of chemotherapy. If chemotherapy weakens the immune system, infections of the nails may occur more easily. These effects are usually temporary and resolve once the offending medication is stopped.

Types of Changes: (can involve the nail plate, nail bed, the area around or under your nail or all of these)

- Color changes (dark or light)
- Nails may become more brittle, break more easily or split.
- Changes in thickness, shape or texture such as grooves or ridges.
- Separation of the nail from the nail bed, with or without pain.
- Swelling in the tips of your fingers or toes, with or without redness
- Pain
- Drainage – may be clear or cloudy with a yellowish or greenish color which may be a sign of infection.
- Bleeding
- Growth/regrowth of the nails may slow.
- Nails that grow into your skin (ingrown nail, usually involves the toes)

You may be able to prevent or minimize these symptoms by:

- applying ice/cold packs to your hands and feet during infusion of the chemotherapy. Ideally, the ice/cold packs should be placed 15 minutes before the infusion starts and keep them on for 15 minutes after the infusion stops.
- Keep hands and feet moisturized with thick creams or ointments such as:

Eucerin	Aquaphor	Vaseline
Bag Balm	Udderly Smooth	Cetaphil
CeraVe	Vanicream	Vaseline Intensive Care
- Wear soft, padded shoes or slippers, even at home.
- Wear soft, cushioned, cotton socks with all your shoes.
- Keep your nails trimmed with smooth edges.

Avoid:

- Professional manicures
- Hot baths or soaks
- Washing dishes by hand. If you must wash dishes by hand, wear latex-free rubber gloves.
- Tight fitting gloves, socks, pantyhose or shoes.
- Activities that produce friction on your nails
- Biting or peeling your nails

For mild symptoms:

- For painless splitting or ridging by applying a water-soluble nail lacquer or a prescription nail polish to protect your nails.
- Biotin may be recommended to help strengthen your nails.

For moderate/severe symptoms (paronychia – swelling and/or redness and/or pain):

- Soak in warm water or Epsom salt for 20-30 minutes three times a day
- After each soak, apply triple antibiotic ointment (over-the-counter, contains bacitracin/neomycin/polymyxin B)
- Call our office if not effective as you may require prescription oral or topical antibiotics or steroids