



Guy's and St Thomas'  
NHS Foundation Trust

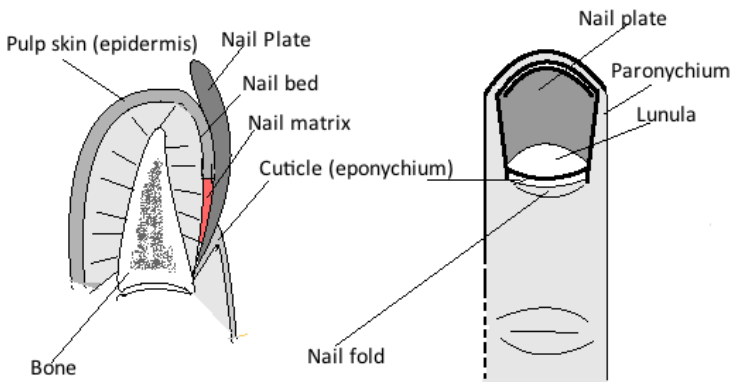
# Nail bed injuries

This booklet will help answer some of the questions you may have about having a nail bed repair. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives of the procedure as well as what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

## What is a nail bed injury?

This is a common type of injury which is often seen when fingers have been crushed. In these types of injuries, bleeding can occur underneath the nail (subungual haematoma) suggesting damage to underlying nail bed. This can sometimes be associated with fracture of the underlying bone in the fingertip, but this does not always need treatment.

The nail bed provides a base for the nail plate to grow. Damage to the nail bed can lead the nail to grow back abnormally with ridges.



## What are the benefits of nail bed repairs?

Having surgery to repair your nail bed can:

- prevent nail deformity
- reduce risk of infection to bone if there is a fracture
- reduce pain.

## What are the risks?

The main complications associated with nail bed repairs include:

- Infection
- Reaction to anaesthetic
- Bleeding
- Haematoma (localised collection of blood)
- Scarring
- Pain
- Irregularity of nail (absent or abnormal growth of nail)
- Poor healing of bone
- Cold intolerance of the finger

## Are there any other alternatives?

It is possible that the wound might heal eventually without surgery, but there is increased risk of nail deformity and infection.

## **Giving consent (permission)**

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

If you need more information before signing the consent form, for example if you have questions about recovering after an operation or about side effects of treatment, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

## **What happens during the procedure?**

This is a day case procedure carried out in an operating theatre usually under local anaesthetic.

During the procedure the nail will be partially or fully removed to clean and repair any damage to the nail bed. The nail is usually replaced using fine dissolvable stitches to act as a splint. In some cases sterile foil might be used instead. A sterile dressing will be applied.

## **Will I feel any pain?**

Your finger and hand will feel numb because of the local anaesthetic used during the procedure but this should wear off within a few hours. Mild pain is normal and you will receive painkillers to help minimise this pain.

## What happens after the procedure?

You will go home on the same day.

After the procedure, the new nail will start to grow. Initially, your new nail may be lumpy or split and it can take up to six months to grow back fully. The new nail will push out the old nail which will eventually fall off.

## What do I need to do after I go home?

Keep dressings clean and dry until it is reviewed by your practice nurse at your GP's surgery.

- Take painkillers regularly if required.
- Keep your hand raised to reduce swelling and pain, especially in the first 48 hours after surgery.
- Avoid handling hot, heavy or sharp objects until the local anesthetic has worn off to avoid any injury.
- Book a visit to see the practice nurse in your local GP surgery one week after the operation to check the wound and change the dressing.
- Exercise your injured finger to prevent stiffness (see hand therapy exercise advice).

## What should I do if I have a problem?

See your GP if you experience any of the following:

- prolonged bleeding
- severe pain
- spreading redness in the skin which may suggest infection
- foul smelling discharge which may suggest infection.

## **Will I have a follow-up appointment?**

No routine follow up is required from us, but you will be followed up by your GP. It is normal that the nail can take six months or more to settle. You should consult your GP if you are concerned about the appearance of your nail six months after your procedure. Your GP will discuss if it is necessary to refer you to one of the hand surgeons.

## Hand therapy exercise advice

Following your surgery it is very important that you do exercises to restore the full movement of your fingers.

You will need to complete three sets of each exercise five times per day. They should be performed gently, holding each position for five seconds.



**1. Straighten all your fingers**



**2. Bend the top two joints keeping your knuckles straight**



**3. Bend the main knuckles and keep your top two joints bend**



**4. Bend your fingers into palm**



**5. Block under the top joint and bend top joint only**



**6. Bend the middle joint only**

## What is a scar?

A scar is part of your body's normal healing process. It is a mixture of blood vessels, cells and fibrous tissue.

Your scar may appear extremely good after your procedure, but then go through a period when it seems to get worse. It may become more red, raised and firm. This should improve with massage but complete healing can take up to 18 months.

Once your wound is fully healed you should start massaging your scar.

## Scar massage



You should massage your scar for **five** minutes, **five** times each day. This will help reduce, redness and swelling, and help flatten the scar

## How to massage

- Massage your scar using a non-perfumed cream.
- Massage should be done using firm circular or zig-zag movements across your scar.



## Stimulating the nerves

After an injury or operation, nerves within the skin can sometimes become overly sensitive. Stimulation to the skin in that region of your body, such as touch or pressure, can feel unpleasant, oversensitive or painful.

This section provides you with information about how to help to reduce these feelings. This is done by applying different types of stimulations to the sensitive areas.

### Different textures

1. Choose a texture that is almost unbearable for you to touch.
2. Rub this texture over the area for a few seconds.
3. Then choose a texture that is bearable.
4. Rub this over the area for two to three minutes, concentrating on feeling the touch rather than the pain.
5. Return to your first (unbearable) texture and rub it over the area for two minutes. It should now be more bearable.
6. Once the first texture becomes bearable, choose a new unbearable one and continue the process.

Examples of textures: velvet, Velcro, cloth, moleskin, towelling.

## Immersion

1. Fill a container with lentils, rice, macaroni or dried beans etc that is just bearable for you to touch.
2. Immerse your finger or hand into the container and work the hand through it for five to seven minutes.
3. Once it becomes bearable, change the texture.

Repeat the different textures and immersion treatments five times a day.

## **Contact us**

If you have any concerns about your operation then please contact the following (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm):

**Trauma co-ordinator 07827 957905**

Please contact your GP or attend your local Emergency Department (A&E) if you have any urgent medical concerns outside of these hours.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## **Pharmacy Medicines Helpline**

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

## **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](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk)

**w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://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](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets), or

**e:** [patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk)

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