Looking after your

Ingrowing Toenail

What is an ingrowing toenail?

An Ingrowing toenail occurs when the side of the nail pierces the surrounding skin. This can be one, or both sides of the toe. It may appear red and inflamed, with pus discharging from the toe.

It is a common foot problem we see in the clinic regularly. The big toe is often affected, and can be very painful.

What is the cause?

There are several factors that may cause an ingrowing toenail. Listed below are four of the most common factors:

- The shape of the nail – an excessively curved or excessively wide nail plate can lead to pressure on the skin around the nail, making the skin more vulnerable to damage.
- Pressure from shoes – too narrow or a very shallow toe-box, can cause pressure on the toes, leading to skin damage around the nail.
- Trauma to the toe – this could be from stubbing the toe or wearing ill-fitting shoes for a prolonged period.
- Improper nail cutting – cutting down the sides of the nail, where a sharp edge of nail is left in the toe, or the nail may break off and pierce the skin.

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How can it be prevented?

- Wearing well-fitting shoes with a fastener to better support your foot and limit movement in the shoe will reduce pressure on the toe.
- Wearing shoes with a toe-box that fits the shape of your toes, e.g., rounded toes = rounded toe-box with good depth.
- Cutting your nails straight across and filing down any sharp edges on the sides of the nail with a good quality emery board.
- Don't allow your toenails to grow too long, cut and file them regularly. This will reduce the nail's chance of breaking and leaving a sharp edge on the side of the toe.

What is the treatment?

If you have an ingrowing toenail, you can start a simple home treatment by soaking the toe in salty water every day and keeping it clean with a sterile lint dressing. This will help prevent infection and reduce any swelling. You will need:

- 1/2 cup of Salt.
- A bowl of freshly boiled lukewarm water (use 2 separate bowls if treating 2 toes).
- A clean piece of Kitchen roll or flannel.
- Sterile lint dressing to keep the toe clean.
- Medical tape.
- A clean pair of scissors.
- Toe bandage size 12 (optional).

Soak the toe for a maximum of 10 minutes, drying around the toe with the kitchen towel, then cover it with a clean dressing. Repeat this daily until it is healed. If it does not improve within 3 to 5 days, book an appointment at the clinic, and one of our podiatrists will be able to help you.

For more information, contact us at Tel. 0118 304 9389 or book online