

TREATMENT OF PARONYCHIA (NAIL INFECTIONS)

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Paronychia is a skin infection that occurs around a fingernail or toenail. It can be acute lasting less than six weeks or can be chronic and persist for more than six weeks. It is most likely to occur following a break in the skin, such as with trauma, nail-biting, and ingrown nails. It can also be more common in patients with diabetes, bad immune systems, poor circulation, or those who work with their hands in water a lot. Symptoms include pain, redness, swelling, and sometimes the development of a pus-filled blister. Your physician may get cultures to look for a specific bacterial infection. Treatments may include soaks in warm water, antibiotic use, cutting the pus pocket open, and sometimes even removal of the nail to help the pus drain. Depending on the extent of your infection, acute paronychia should clear within a few days to a few weeks.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES INCLUDE:

- If a pus pocket is present, your physician may need to open this up to let the pus drain.
- Simple treatment may include soaking the affected area in warm water several times a day and applying a topical antiseptic or antibiotic ointment.
- If no pus pocket is present, your physician may have you do an antiseptic soak such as Chlorhexidine.
- Oral antibiotics may be necessary for severe or prolonged bacterial infections.
- If no response occurs with soaks and topical ointment use, then your physician may prescribe an oral antibiotic, especially if a pus pocket is present. Antibiotics commonly include doxycycline, clindamycin, or penicillin.
- In areas where there is a lot of methicillin-resistant Staphs. Aureus (MRSA) present, different antibiotics may have to be used. Sometimes these need to be used as a preventative measure.
- If a herpes simplex infection is suspected, you may be prescribed an antiviral medication.

MEDICAL CARE & TREATMENT OPTIONS:

Acute paronychia usually clears within a few days and will rarely recur in healthy people. Chronic paronychia may last for several months or longer and may recur in predisposed individuals. If you develop worsening of symptoms, please call your Osteopathic Family Physician. Paronychia is a treatable condition, and your physician can work with you to optimize your treatment. In case of an emergency, you should call your doctor or 911 right away.

SOURCE(S): American Academy of Family Physician, UpToDate.com and Dermnetnz.org

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