

DESCRIPTION Inflammation of tissue folds that surround a nail. The inflammation can be from bacterial or fungal infection, and is not contagious

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Bacterial paronychia:

- Pain or tenderness, redness, warmth, and swelling of tissue adjacent to the fingernail.

Fungal paronychia:

- Redness and swelling around the fingernail.

- Central whitish area produced by pus.

- No pain, warmth, itching or pus.

CAUSES

- Bacterial paronychia is preceded by injury, such as a torn hangnail. Bacteria is usually *Staphylococcus*.

- Fungal paronychia is caused by a fungus or yeast infection.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Work Exposure to constant wetness.
- Nail biting or finger sucking.
- Shoes that bind or pinch the toes.

- Diabetes.
- Artificial nails.
- Injury around the fingernail.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Bacterial paronychia is curable with treatment in 2 weeks but may reoccur.

- Fungal paronychia is chronic and may require 6 months to heal but reoccurs.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

If untreated, may permanently damage the fingernail and nail bed. Rarely, the infection may enter bone or bloodstream.

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do an examination of the affected nail. Lab tests may be done to identify the germ.
- Treatment involves avoiding factors that may be the cause, self-care, and drugs.
- Sometimes part, or all, of a toenail may need to be removed, if an abscess occurs, it may require incision and drainage.
- Use warm-water soaks several times a day.
- Wear heavy-duty vinyl gloves to prevent contact with irritating substances, such as water, soap, detergent, metal scrubbing pads, and other chemicals or when you peel or squeeze citric fruits or potatoes. Dry the insides of gloves after use and discard if they develop a hole. Wear leather or heavy-duty fabric gloves for housework or gardening.
- Avoid contact with irritating chemicals, such as paint, paint thinner, turpentine, and polish for cars, floors, furniture, or metal.
- Use lukewarm water and very little mild soap to shower or bathe. All soaps are irritating.

MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotics may be prescribed for bacterial infection.
- Topical antifungals and topical steroids may be prescribed for fungal infection.

➤ Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription, even if you start to feel better.

➤ Antibiotics and steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.

Your doctor also recommends the following over-the-counter medications. These medications may offer significant symptom relief:

- For fever or pain use acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

(Acetaminophen and ibuprofen may also be alternated every 3 hours for persistent fever or pain.)

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

- Pain is not helped by treatment.
- Symptoms worsen or do not improve with treatment.