Surgical procedure

Surgery for Ingrowing Toenail (Adult)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION
This surgical fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional. If your injury or illness is critical or life threatening, call triple zero (000). To speak to a registered nurse, call healthdirect on 1800 022 222.

Notes and questions to bring to your doctor

For more help with what to ask your doctor, visit healthdirect.gov.au/question-builder
This document will give you information about surgery for an ingrowing toenail. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

**What is an ingrowing toenail?**
An ingrowing toenail happens when your toenail grows into the skin around it (see figure 1). The skin can get damaged, causing infection and pain. The problem usually happens to your big toe.

**What does the operation involve?**
The operation is usually performed under a local anaesthetic.
The operation usually takes about 10 minutes and may involve nail avulsion (removing your whole toenail), wedge excision (removing part of your toenail), nail-bed ablation (removing part of or the whole toenail and then applying a chemical or an electric current to the area of tissue that your toenail grows from), and Zadek’s procedure (removing your whole toenail and then cutting away the area of tissue that your toenail grows from).

**What complications can happen?**
1. **General complications**
   - Pain
   - Bleeding
   - Unsightly scarring
2. **Specific complications**
   - Infection of the surgical site (wound)
   - Infection in the underlying bone

**How soon will I recover?**
After a short while you will be able to go home. Spend most of the time during the first few days with your leg raised so that the swelling settles. After that, you can usually start to be a little more active.
Do not play sports or do strenuous exercise for two weeks. Keep the dressing dry.
Try to cut your toenails straight across and do not leave sharp edges. Wear shoes that fit the shape of your feet comfortably.
An ingrowing toenail can happen again.

**Summary**
Surgery to remove an ingrowing toenail should take away infection and pain.

**Acknowledgements**
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