

Nail bed Injury Repair

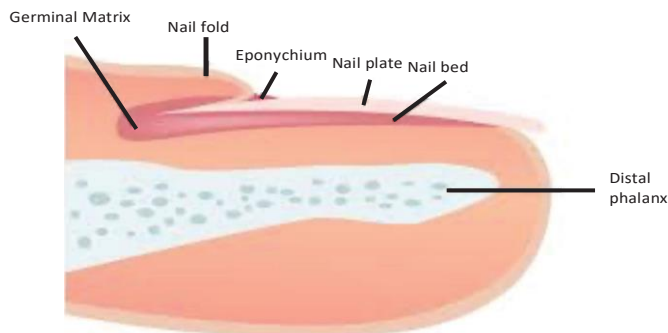
Welcome to the Southern Adelaide Local Health Network.

This information sheet aims to answer any questions you may have about your child having a nail bed injury repair.

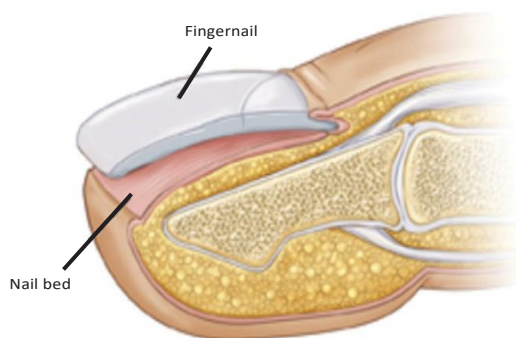
Nail bed injury repair

Injuries to the fingertips and the nail bed are some of the most common injuries in childhood. The most common nail bed injury is blunt trauma, for example when a fingertip or toe gets crushed or trapped between or by a heavy object, such as being shut in a closing door.

When the nail bed is injured, the nail will regrow if the "bed" that generates it is repaired.



The nail bed sits between the fingernail or toenail and the bone. It helps the nail grow normally and secures the nail plate to the fingertip or toe. Even if there is no obvious damage to the nail there could be damage to the nail bed underneath. Any unrepaired damage could cause the nail to grow with ridges or be deformed.



As well as injury to the nail bed, there may also be a laceration to the fingertip and sometimes a small chip or fracture in the bone. These fractures often don't need any treatment other than cleaning as the bone will heal by itself.

How is my child's nailbed injury repaired?

Your child may need a short operation to repair the nail bed. This is normally carried out under general anaesthetic. The anaesthetist will speak with you and your child before the operation and answer any questions which you may have.

What happens during the operation?

During the operation, the surgeon will remove any remaining nail and look at the nail bed underneath. The area will be thoroughly cleaned, and the nail bed repaired with dissolvable stitches.

Any lacerations to the fingertip will be repaired at the same time. At the end of the operation a sterile dressing will be put on to protect the repaired nail. This may be a bit bulky especially on younger children who need extra protection.

What happens if my child does not get treatment?

Nail bed injuries can cause abnormal nail growth, so it's important to seek advice. There is also a small risk of an infection getting into the bone if there is an underlying fracture.

Why should my child have surgery for their nail bed injury?

Surgery should mean your child's wound should heal more quickly and with less pain. It should also lessen the risk of infection or nail deformity although this is not guaranteed.

What should I expect as my child's nail re-grows?

A new nail will regrow from the base of the nailbed underneath the skin over the back of the nail. Usually between weeks 3 and 5, you will notice a rough area starting just beyond the skin over the back of the nail. This will then make its way along and eventually replace the old nail plate. This takes an average of 3 to 4 months.

At some point during this regrowth, the new nail plate will push off the old nail plate, which will separate from the finger. This will happen naturally and is expected.

The first nail is usually slightly rough, and several cycles of nail growth are required (9- 12 months) until the final shiny appearance of the nail returns. Most nailed injuries heal uneventfully and regenerate a normal new nail over 3-4 months.

Very rarely, if a lot of scar tissue is generated by the body, the nail plate can lift off the nailbed or generate ridges in the nail as it passes the scar. This cannot be predicted until the nail has regrown. If this happens then you can make another appointment to see your plastic surgeon to discuss the options available.

How to care for your child's finger at home

Your child's finger will be bandaged after the surgery (whole hand in young children). This bandage should be kept clean and dry until your appointment in the plastic surgery clinic. This is usually between 7 and 14 days after the injury.

At this appointment, your child's finger dressing will be removed, and a small light dressing or band aid reapplied. The stitches are dissolving and do not need to be removed. You will be given directions as to how to care for the finger from there.

Tips for keeping bandage clean and dry:

- Cover bandage with a sock if using hands/crawling
- Cover bandage with a plastic bag when bathing/showering
- While the dressing is in place, don't let your child do any activities involving sand and grit or where the wound could get knocked or banged.

If your child shows any signs of an infection

- Fever
- Increasing pain
- Redness spreading up the arm
- Pus on the dressings

Contact the plastic surgery registrar on (08) 8204 5511 or present to your nearest emergency department for assessment

Sources:

WCH (nail bed Injury repair)

Uptodate (evaluation and management of fingertip injuries)

For more information

Paediatric Unit

Women's and Children's Division
Flinders Medical Centre
Bedford Park SA 5042
Telephone: 08 8204 5511
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/fmc



This document has been reviewed and endorsed by consumers.