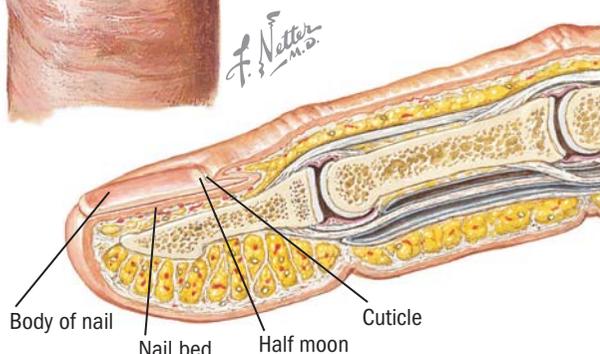


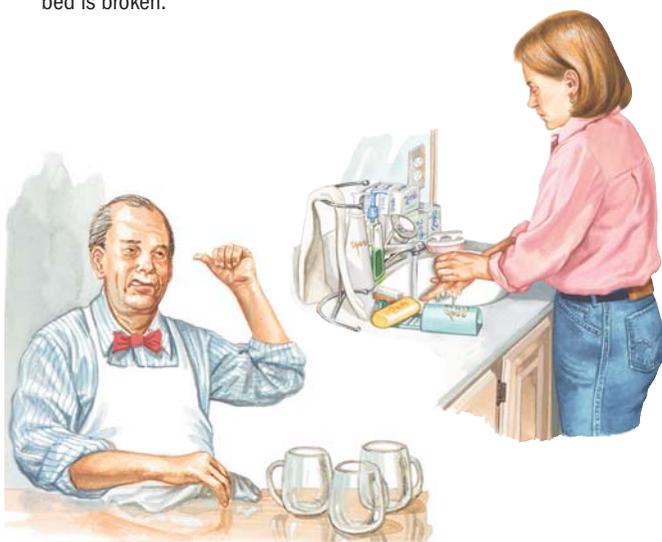
MANAGING YOUR PARONYCHIA



Paronychia is a very common infection of the skin around fingernails, caused by bacteria or fungi. The skin becomes red and swollen, and the area may have pus.



The nail body lies on top of the nail bed. An infection can happen when the seal between the body and bed is broken.



You may be more prone to developing the infection if your hands are often wet (such as dishwashers and bartenders). Biting nails or hangnails, thumb sucking, penetrating injuries (e.g., from splinters), and exposure to harsh chemicals, acrylic nails, or nail glue can lead to infection.

Your doctor will diagnose paronychia by examining your fingernails.



What Is Paronychia?

Paronychia is a common infection under the skin around the fingernails. It can be acute (come on suddenly) or chronic (last a long time). It occurs more in females than males. An abscess, or pus, can form if the infection is not treated.

What Causes Paronychia?

Bacteria (usually the ones called *Staphylococcus* and *Streptococcus*) or fungi cause paronychia by getting into the skin through a wound. These wounds can come from biting nails or hangnails; thumb sucking; penetrating injuries; foreign bodies such as splinters; and exposure to harsh chemicals, acrylic nails, or nail glue. People who often have wet hands that aren't dried well (such as dishwashers, bartenders, and housekeepers) and people who have diabetes have a higher risk of getting paronychia.

What Are the Symptoms of Paronychia?

Redness and swelling of the skin near the fingernail occur first. Then, fluid or pus may be seen under the nail. The area is usually very tender and feels puffy or fluid filled. As paronychia continues, throbbing pain often occurs.

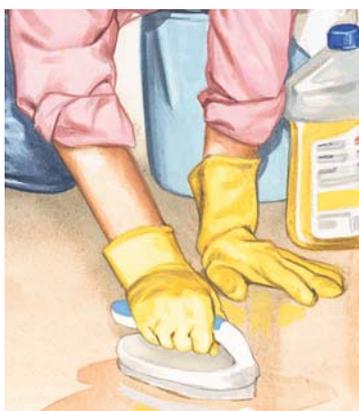
How Is Paronychia Diagnosed?

The doctor will diagnose paronychia by doing an examination of the fingernails.



Treatment can be simply soaking in water with liquid antibacterial soap. Your doctor may prescribe a topical antibiotic cream or lotion (if bacteria are the cause) or an antifungal medicine given by mouth (if a fungus is the cause).

Your doctor may need to drain the pus.



Wear vinyl gloves to prevent contact with irritating substances, such as water, soap, detergent, scouring pads, and chemicals.

How Is Paronychia Treated?

Antibiotics are used if paronychia is due to a bacterial infection, or antifungal medications are used if it is due to a fungus. The doctor may also drain the area of pus. Draining the pus usually provides a complete cure. Draining may involve making a small cut over the area or separating a small part of the nail from the skin. In advanced cases, a small piece of nail may be removed, but the nail almost always grows back.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Paronychia:

- ✓ **DO** protect your hands from water. Keep them clean and dry. Wash with soap and water after doing dirty work.
- ✓ **DO** wear vinyl gloves to prevent contact with irritating substances, such as water, soap, detergent, metal scrubbing pads, scouring pads, and chemicals, such as paint, paint thinner, turpentine, and polishes for cars, floors, shoes, metal, and furniture. Also wear gloves when you peel or squeeze lemons, oranges, sour fruits, tomatoes, or potatoes.
- ✓ **DO** wear leather or heavy-duty fabric gloves for housework or gardening.
- ✓ **DO** keep your bandage clean and dry. Change it at least twice daily.
- ✓ **DO** leave hangnails alone and avoid injuring your fingertips.
- ✓ **DO** take prescribed antibiotics as directed.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if the pad of your finger becomes swollen or painful, or your finger or knuckle becomes swollen or hurts to bend.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have red streaks from the infected area, fever, or chills.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if your pain lasts for more than 24 hours after treatment.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have a reaction to your medicine.
- ⊗ **DON'T** try to drain paronychia yourself with pins or knives.
- ⊗ **DON'T** bite your nails.
- ⊗ **DON'T** allow the wound to become dirty.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- American Academy of Dermatology
- Tel: (866) 503-SKIN (7546)
- Website: <http://www.aad.org>