

Patient Information for Bacterial paronychia

Overview

Paronychia, commonly known as bacterial nail infection, is inflammation of the region of the finger or toe where the nail starts to grow, which is called the proximal nail fold (PNF).

Paronychia is usually caused by a bacterial infection but can be caused by a yeast or virus, typically the herpes simplex virus (HSV). This inflammation may occur all of a sudden or may be a long-term problem or one that keeps coming back (chronic).

Bacterial paronychia develops fairly quickly over a period of days along a break in the skin and is usually seen at the side of the nail.

Who's At Risk

Bacterial paronychia may occur at any age but is particularly common in children.

Signs & Symptoms

Bacterial nail infection most often affects the proximal nail fold of the fingers and less commonly affects the toes.

The proximal nail fold is red, swollen, painful, and may contain pus. Usually one nail is affected.

Self-Care Guidelines

Try soaking the nails in warm water.

When to Seek Medical Care

See your doctor for an evaluation if you notice signs of worsening infection.

Treatments Your Physician May Prescribe

For bacterial paronychia, your doctor may:

- Puncture and drain the affected area and test for bacteria.
- Prescribe antibiotics for a bacterial infection.