

Nail Changes During Treatment with Chemotherapy

This information describes nail changes (fingers and toes) that you may have while taking certain chemotherapy drugs and how to manage these changes.

The chemotherapy drugs that most often cause nail changes are:

- Docetaxel (Taxotere ®)
- Paclitaxel (Taxol ®)
- Albumin-bound paclitaxel (Abraxane ®)
- Capecitabine (Xeloda ®)
- Pegylated doxorubicin (Doxil ®)
- Fluorouracil (5FU ®)

Nail Changes

You may have any of the following nail changes in some or all of your nails:

- Changes in the color of your nails (dark or light)
- Grooves or ridges
- Nails that break more easily
- Changes in nail shape or texture
- Nail splitting
- Nail separation from the skin below. This may or may not be painful.
- Discharge or fluid from under the nail. It may or may not smell bad and be painful. This may or may not be an infection.
- Swelling in the tips of your fingers or toes
- Slow nail growth
- Growth on the side of your nails

These changes can involve your nail plate, nail bed, the area around or under your nail, or all of these areas (see Figure 1).

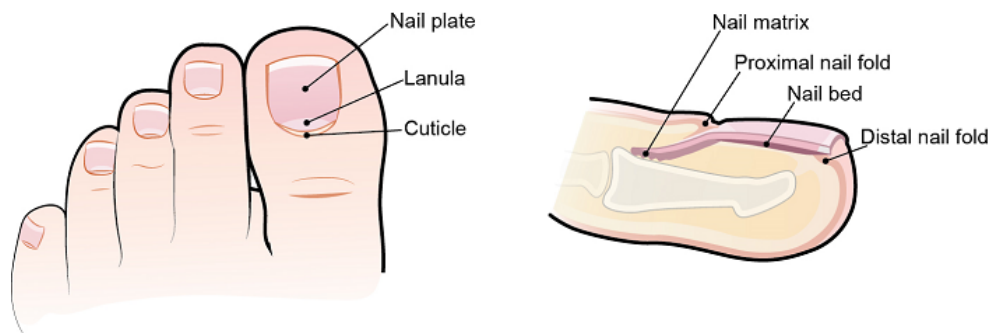


Figure 1. The parts of your nail

These changes may stop you from doing your usual activities. It may be hard to pick up small things such as a pen or a fork. You may have trouble walking.

For some chemotherapy drugs, the risk of developing side effects is very high. For others, the risk is much lower. Your care team will talk to you about the medication you're taking and your risk for developing nail changes.

You may notice nail changes as early as 3 to 6 weeks after treatment begins. The changes usually go away when:

- The dose of your medication is lowered.
- Treatment is stopped.

It takes around 6 months to regrow a fingernail and up to 1.5 years to regrow a toenail. Most new nails will look normal. However, for some people, the new nails may regrow abnormally. Your care team will speak with you about this.

Managing Your Symptoms

Tell your care team as soon as you begin to have any symptoms of nail changes. There may be medications that can help. Follow the suggestions below to manage these symptoms.

Do not:

- Take hot baths or soak your hands or feet in hot water or hot tubs.
- Wear tight-fitting gloves, socks, pantyhose, or shoes.
- Do anything that would cause friction or pressure on your nails, such as walking long distances or wearing tight-fitting shoes.
- Bite or peel your nails.

Do:

- Tell your doctor if you have diabetes, vascular disease, peripheral neuropathy, or an autoimmune disease. These things may increase your risk of skin breakdown, slow wound healing, and infection.
- Ask your doctor or nurse if you can place cold packs on your hands and feet while you're getting chemotherapy. If you can, start using them 15 minutes before each chemotherapy infusion starts and keep them on until 15 minutes after the infusion is finished.
- Keep your hands and feet well-moisturized with fragrance-free creams or ointments. Try thick creams or ointments, such as:
 - Eucerin ®
 - Aquaphor ®
 - Vaseline ®
 - Bag Balm ®
 - Udderly Smooth ®
 - Cetaphil ®
 - CeraVe ®
 - Vanicream ®
 - Vaseline ® Intensive Care ™

- If you apply lotion to your feet, be careful in the shower/tub as it will be slippery.
- Wear soft, padded shoes or slippers. Examples are Tempur-Pedic® slippers and Crocs®.
- Wear soft, cushioned, cotton socks with all your shoes.
- Wear white cotton gloves when carrying objects, doing physical work, or playing sports. You can use vinyl gloves for dishwashing.
- Keep your nails short with smooth edges. You can trim them using a nail clipper and file.
- If you are having difficulties with your nails, you may be referred to a podiatrist.
- These things may increase your risk of skin breakdown, slow wound healing, and cause infection.

Other suggestions:

- Use biotin (Appearex®) for brittle nails.
- See a podiatrist if necessary. A podiatrist is a doctor who treats conditions of foot, ankle, and leg

Call your nurse case manager if you have any signs or symptoms of infection:

- A fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Chills
- Any of the following symptoms around or under your nail:
 - Skin that is warm, hot, painful or hard to the touch
 - Bright yellow or green drainage
 - Bleeding
 - A bad smell
 - Increasing redness or swelling
 - Increasing pain or discomfort
 - Redness