



Suffolk Podiatry

Thickened and Curved Toenails

Why do nails become thickened or curved?

It is normal for nails to:

- Become thicker or break more easily (brittle) as you get older.
- Become harder, softer, or more brittle during pregnancy (they should be healthier within 6 months of having a baby).
- Change colour, become loose, and eventually fall off after an injury. Toenails that fall off after an injury can take up to 18 months to grow back.



Nails can also become thickened or curved due to damage from:

- Repetitive small trauma such as from tight footwear.
- More severe trauma such as a heavy weight dropped on the toe.



What are the symptoms?

- The nail may look thickened and darker in colour.
- In severe cases, pressure from footwear can cause pain.
- Curved (involuting) nails may cause pain where the sides of the nail press on the skin either side of the nail.

Do I need treatment?

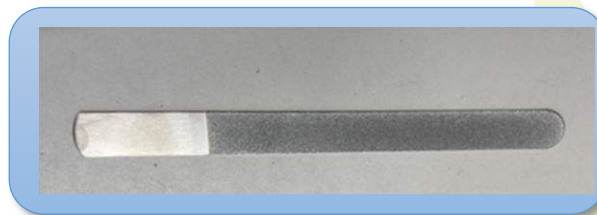
In most cases, no treatment is needed if the nail is causing no discomfort. Thickened toenails can be thinned using a nail file.

Contact your GP or a podiatrist if the skin around your nails has become sore, red, swollen and warm (paronychia) as this can be a sign of an infection or ingrown toenail.

Nails which cause persistent pain can be considered for permanent surgical removal.

Self-care and treatment

- Thickened toenails can be thinned by regularly using a nail file



- Curved (involuting) nails are generally more comfortable if not cut too short.
- Wear suitable footwear with plenty of room for the toes. See our Footwear Advice leaflet on our website <https://suffolkfed.org.uk/healthcare-services/podiatry/> for more guidance.

When should I visit a podiatrist?

Unless you have a high-risk medical condition, most patients with thickened or curved nails do not require NHS podiatry and should follow the self-care advice outlined above

Private podiatrists will often provide treatment (e.g. thinning of thickened toenails). We recommend that you ensure any podiatrist you see is registered with the HCPC (Health and Care Professions Council). You can check their membership details by going to <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/check>

For more information on nail problems visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nail-problems/>

Suffolk Podiatry
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An NHS service provided by Suffolk GP Federation working with ESNEFT (East Suffolk & North Essex NHS Foundation Trust) in the East, West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust in the West, Suffolk County Council and Norfolk & Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

