

Nail Changes

Fingernail or toenail changes can occur during and after chemotherapy or other cancer treatments. Nails can change color, grow lines, become sensitive or brittle, lift, loosen, or fall off. Contact your healthcare team if you start to experience pain or discomfort due to changes in your nails.

Things to do during treatment:

- Keep nails short
- Wear socks and shoes that are wide and comfortable
- Protect hands with gloves when doing household chores such as washing dishes or using cleaning products
- Use cuticle cream or petroleum jelly to keep nails and skin moisturized; do not cut cuticles
- If your nails become loose or painful, you can cover them with gauze or adhesive bandages to keep the nail in place
- Call your healthcare team if nail becomes detached or if you have any signs of infection such as:
 - Redness
 - Swelling
 - Tenderness
 - Drainage
 - Warmth
 - Your healthcare team may instruct you to soak your fingernails or toenails in either bleach or vinegar solutions to avoid infection
 - Below are the instructions to prepare these soaks:

Bleach soaks = mix 4 teaspoons of bleach in 16 cups (1 gallon) of water

- Pour mixture in clean cup or bowl
- Soak nails in mixture for 10 minutes each day

Vinegar soaks = mix 1 ½ cups of white vinegar in 16 cups of water

- Pour mixture in clean cup or bowl
- Soak nails in mixture for 5 minutes each day

Things to avoid during treatment:

- Artificial nails such as acrylic nails, gels, and wraps
- Nail polish and nail polish remover
- Manicures and pedicures at nail salons
- Contact with harsh chemicals, such as household cleaners
- Cutting your cuticles
- Biting your nails or cuticles

After cancer treatment:

- After completing cancer treatment, nail discoloration may last for several months.
- Check with your healthcare provider about the use of nail polish.
- When removing nail polish, use a non-acetone remover. Acetone-based remover can be harsh on fingernails.

If you are in need of immediate assistance, please call 732-235-2465 and select the option that best meets your needs.