

A B C D E F G H Children's Health

Parents: Don't Cut Children's Ingrown Toenails

(NAPSA)—You can protect your youngsters from the complications that sometimes arise from a common condition. Ingrown toenails occur in all age groups, especially infants, small children and teenagers. The American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS) advises parents to avoid risky at-home treatments that can worsen the condition and lead to potentially serious complications, such as severe pain, infection of the skin or underlying bone and possible deformity of the toe.

A nail becomes ingrown when the corners or sides of it grow into the skin of the toe, causing pain, redness, swelling and infection. Some children may complain about foot pain when wearing shoes.

If the problem is mild, parents should soak the child's foot in warm water for 15 or 20 minutes a day. If pain and swelling increase, a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon should be consulted to determine if the toenail is imbedded far enough to warrant surgical removal. Gary Dockery, DPM, FACFAS, strongly advises parents against trying to snip out the ingrown part of a child's toenail.

"Bathroom surgery for ingrown nails is very risky, as the potential for a serious infection is quite high," said Dockery. "Unfortunately, many parents don't realize there are risks involved, and we



see numerous cases in which complications have developed from do-it-yourself surgery on a child's toenail."

Dockery said surgery to remove an ingrown nail is a simple in-office procedure. Post-operative care involves soaking the foot in warm water for several days, applying antibiotic ointment, and wearing a bandage on the site until it heals.

In many cases, problems stemming from ingrown nails can be minimized or prevented by following a few simple tips:

- Wear proper-fitting, softer, wider shoes; don't force-fit hand-me-downs
- Make sure the child's feet are kept clean and nails cut properly
- Never try to cut away the ingrown part of the nail

For further information about ingrown toenails and to locate a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon, call ACFAS toll-free at 1-888-THE FEET or visit www.acfas.org.