Wound Care After Nail Biopsy

Caring for Your Nail Biopsy Site

- Leave the dressing in place for 24 hours.
- Keep dressings dry (cover with plastic bag if needing to get limb wet).
- Change the dressing 24 hours after your surgery. If you would like to return to the clinic so we can change the dressing for you, then please call to schedule a nurse visit.
- Please also schedule any suture removal and follow-up visit(s).

If you choose to change your own dressing, then you should:

1. Remove the dressings applied in clinic.
2. If the dressing applied in clinic sticks to the wound, then soak the entire bandage in a 50:50 mixture of hydrogen peroxide and warm water for 10 to 15 minutes to loosen it.
3. Cleanse the wound with gentle soap and water. Rinse well.
4. Gently pat the wound and skin around it until dry.
5. Apply Vaseline® to wound.
6. Reapply a padded wound dressing or Band-Aid®.
7. Repeat steps 1 through 6 one time per day until the wound is healed.

What to Expect After Nail Biopsy

The skin under your nail will be pink with a little blood and it will be tender. This will improve with time. The numbing medicine will wear off in 4 to 6 hours. Most patients report throbbing pain in the first one to two days after the biopsy. This pain will decrease within a week.

After the first week, the finger/toe will still be tender to the touch. You may still have numbness and/or tingling at the biopsy site after a few weeks. This should get better with time.

If we laid your nail back down to act as a natural bandage after surgery, it would slowly lift off as the skin under it heals. As the nail we replaced lifts off, clip it so that it does not catch on things. A new nail will grow in and replace the old one.

If you get scabs or crusts on the wound, then soak the finger/toe for 10 minutes in a 50:50 mixture of hydrogen peroxide and warm water. If the crusts do not fall of after soaking, then gently remove them with something soft such as a Q-tip®.

When to Call

- If you have any questions, comments or concerns.
- If you have heavy bleeding. It is normal to have a mild to moderate amount of oozing that may soak through gauze.
- If the wound becomes warm to the touch or oozes pus.
- If you have pain that cannot be controlled.

Pain Control

- Keep the finger/toe elevated at least at waist height when you can.
- Sleep with a pillow under the hand or foot that was treated.
- Keep pressure off the biopsy site for at least the first two days.
- If the dressing is too tight, then unwrap the outer layer of stretchy gauze and rewrap to comfort.

- If your procedure was done on a toe, then wear loose fitting shoes.
- Keep the wound covered with a thin layer of Vaseline®. This protects it and helps it heal faster.
- We suggest you take the pain medicine that your doctor recommended for you once the numbing medicine starts to wear off. Then take as needed unless your primary care doctor has told you not to.

Who to Call

UW Health Junction Rd Medical Center
Dermatology (1st Floor)
451 Junction Road
Madison, WI 53717
(608) 265-7670

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 8/2025 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7529.