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Clinical Reference Systems: Pediatric Advisor 11.0

Fingernail Infection (Paronychia)

DESCRIPTION

- a large pimple at the junction of the cuticle and the fingernail
- redness and tenderness of this area
- occasionally, pus draining from this area.

CAUSE

If the cuticle has a large pimple or is draining pus, it may be infected with the Staphylococcus bacteria. The bacteria usually enter the skin through a break in the skin caused by pulling on or chewing on the cuticle. If the cuticle area is only red and swollen, it may be due to Candida (yeast). The Candida superinfections usually occur in thumb- or finger-suckers, swimmers, or other children who have waterlogged cuticles.

EXPECTED COURSE

With proper treatment, this infection should clear up in 7 days. If not, your physician may prescribe additional medication.

HOME TREATMENT

1. Antiseptic soaks

If the cause is bacteria, soak the infected finger three times a day for 10

minutes in warm water and liquid antibacterial soap. Do this for 4 days, or longer if the wound has not healed.

2. Topical medications (for bacterial infection)

Consult with your physician about the possibility of an appropriate topical medication. Apply it as directed. Cover it with an adhesive bandage. Continue to apply the medication until no signs of infection remain.

3. Open any large pimple

Open and drain any visible pus pocket using a needle sterilized with rubbing alcohol or a flame. Make a large opening where the pus pocket joins with the nail. If the pus doesn't run out, gently squeeze the pus pocket. Clean the area and cover with a bandage.

4. Yeast (Candida) infections

For yeast infections, consult with your physician for appropriate medications. Also, keep the area dry. Do not cover it with a bandage.

5. Prevention

Discourage any picking or chewing of hangnails (loose pieces of cuticle). Instead, cut these off with nail clippers.

CALL YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICIAN IMMEDIATELY IF:

- Your child gets a fever.
- A red streak spreads beyond the cuticle.

CALL YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICIAN DURING OFFICE HOURS IF:

- The infection has not improved after 48 hours on home treatment.
- The infection is not totally cleared up by 7 days.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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