

Four steps for healthier nails

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(HealthDay)—Good nail care is important, but it's possible to overdo it.

For instance, it turns out that too much clipping can actually be harmful.

Trimming nails every day can create stress across the entire nail. Over time, it can change nail shape and even lead to conditions like ingrown toe nails.

It's fine to trim your nails with nail clippers or scissors, but no more than once every week or two. Fingernails should follow the shape of your fingertips, straight across and slightly rounded at the sides. Clip toenails straight across at the level of the toe. File in only one direction to keep nails strong.

Here are other care tips:

- Keep nails clean and dry whenever possible.
- Moisturize nails and cuticles with [hand lotion](#) or cream.
- Nail polish offers some protection, but don't use polish remover more than twice a month.
- Try to avoid all nail products with toluene, formaldehyde and dibutyl phthalate.
- Avoid prolonged exposure to water when bathing and housecleaning. Protect nails from harsh chemicals by wearing cotton-lined rubber gloves when cleaning.

It's also important to check your nails regularly for warning signs of a problem that merits a doctor visit.

Signs to look for include:

- Discoloration of the entire nail or a dark streak under a nail.
- Any change in shape.
- Any change in thickness—thinner or thicker.
- Separation of the nail from the surrounding skin or nail bed.

- Bleeding, redness, swelling or pain around the nails.

If you see any worrisome signs, get prompt medical attention from your doctor or a dermatologist who specializes in [nail](#) problems.

More information: The Mayo Clinic has more [do's and don'ts for healthy nails](#).

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