Paronychia (Felon, Whitlow)

Paronychia is caused by germs. It is an infection of the skin. It happens by the fingernail. You can avoid it by **NOT**:

- Pulling on hangnails.
- Nail biting.
- Thumb sucking.
- Cutting fingernails and toenails too short.
- Cutting the *cuticle* (skin at the base and sides of the fingernail and toenail).

When it occurs at the tips of the finger it is called felon. When the cause is from the herpes simplex virus (HSV) it is called whitlow. If there is an abscess, it is drained. This means the abscess will be cut open so the pus can get out.

HOME CARE

When an abcess is drained, follow-up care includes:

- Keeping the finger or toe very dry. Put rubber gloves over cotton gloves when putting hands in water.
- Keeping the wound clean and dressed as told by your doctor.
- Soaking the fingers or toes in warm water for 15 to 20 minutes. Soak them 3 to 4 times per day for germ infections. Fungal infections are very difficult to treat. Fungal infections often require treatment for a long time.
- Taking any *antibiotics* (medicines that kill germs) as directed.
- Taking only over-the-counter or ordered medicines for pain, discomfort or fever as directed by your doctor.

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF:

- There is redness, swelling or pain that gets worse.
- Pus is coming from the wound.
- You or your child has a temperature by mouth above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- There is a bad smell coming from the wound or dressing.

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