Fingertip Infections

When an infection is around the nail, it is called a paronychia. When it appears over the tip of the finger, it is called a **felon**. These infections are due to minor injuries or cracks in the skin. **If they are not treated properly, they can lead to bone infection and permanent damage to the fingernail**.

Incision and drainage is necessary if a pus pocket (an *abscess*) has formed. Antibiotics and pain medicine may also be needed. **Keep your hand elevated for the next 2-3 days to reduce swelling and pain**. If a pack was placed in the abscess, it should be removed in 1-2 days. Soak the finger in warm water for 20 minutes 4 times daily to promote drainage.

Keep the hands as dry as possible. Wear protective gloves with cotton liners. Anti-yeast pills by mouth for one to two weeks may be helpful. See your caregiver for follow-up care as recommended.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Keep wound clean, dry and dressed as suggested by your caregiver between hot soaks.
- Soak in warm salt water for fifteen minutes, four times per day for bacterial infections.
- Your caregiver will prescribe an antibiotic if a bacterial infection is suspected. Take antibiotics as directed and finish the prescription, even if the problem appears to be improving before the medicine is gone.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF :

- There is redness, swelling, or increasing pain in the wound.
- Pus is coming from wound.
- An unexplained oral temperature above 102º F (38.9º C) develops.
- You notice a foul smell coming from the wound or dressing.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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