

# Hand Infections

## What causes hand infections?

Hand infections happen when there is an injury to the skin of the hand, fingers, cuticle, or nail folds. Common causes include manicures, ingrown nails, bites, or puncture wounds. Infections may appear in the fold of your nail, at the tip of your finger, or anywhere on your hand. Symptoms of an infection include pain, redness, and swelling. Sometimes viruses cause hand infections. People with these types of infections usually have blisters, mild burning, or itching.

## Can I treat a hand infection myself?

Most minor skin infections respond well to home treatment. This includes warm water soaks, raising the hand above the heart, and resting the hand with the fingers slightly bent. Make sure to clean all open wounds with soap and water. Wounds that have drainage should be covered with a bandage. Never pop or remove the skin over a blister.

## When should I see my doctor?

See your doctor if the infection gets worse or does not get better after you follow the steps above. You may need antibiotics or a procedure to get pus out of the wound.

These kinds of hand infections should be treated by your doctor right away:

- Any infection of the finger pad
- Bite wounds, including injuries caused by closed fists coming into contact with another person's mouth
- Infections caused by an object entering the deep tissues of the hand

These types of infections can cause long-term problems if they are not treated quickly. See your doctor right away if you have trouble moving your fingers, if your entire finger is swollen, or if touching your finger hurts badly.

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