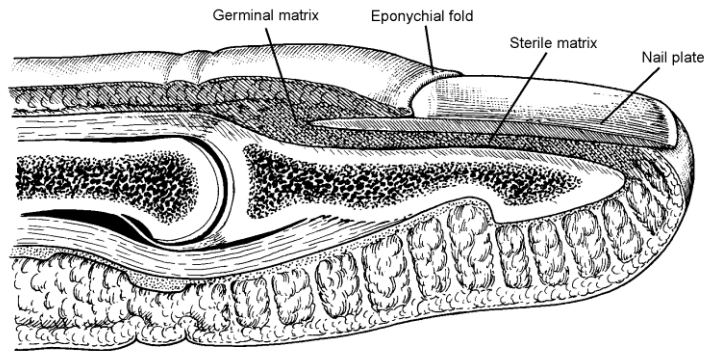


NAIL ABLATION

The nail is a specialist skin appendage which has important functions for grip and sensation. It consists of nail plate itself, the nail matrix, the nail bed below it and the grooves surrounding it. Damage or disease cause altered growth. It is unsightly and can cause complications such as trauma to the nail, bleeding and infection.

Sometimes, it is necessary to get rid of either portions or all of the nail, a process called ablation.

This involves finding and removing the germinal matrix from which the nail plate grows



The operation is usually performed under local anaesthetic (finger numb). The nail matrix once found is either cut out or destroyed by the application of a chemical agent called Phenol. The finger will be dressed with a supportive dressing that permits finger movement and light hand use. You will be discharged with specific instructions (“Finger Surgery”) relating to exercises and wound care. Any stitches will be dissolving by about two weeks after your operation.

Nail regrowth – The germinal matrix is not always easy to find or see. Some regrowth can occur in up to 10% of operations and might necessitate a repeat operation.

Delayed healing - Average healing times are between four and six weeks but can be longer in some cases

Phenol burns - Occasionally, the chemical used to stop the nail growing back spreads onto the tissues next to the nail causing pain and delayed healing.

Bleeding This is usually minor but will often cause some staining of the dressing in the first few hours. Significant bleeding and/or blood collection under the wound (haematoma) is very rare.

Infection This is indicated by pain, throbbing, redness or other discolouration and discharge. Please seek advice promptly.

Scar You may have a scar, which will be firm to touch and tender for some months. This can be helped by firm massage with the moisturizing cream.

Stiffness This can occur if the hand is not used and exercised as recommended after the operation.

Regional pain syndrome About 5% (1 in 20) experience what can be generalised swelling, pain and stiffness in the hand after the operation. This problem cannot be predicted, is variable in severity and is principally treated with physiotherapy.

Nerve The area around the scar may end up feeling a little numb due to damage of tiny nerves.

Tendon The tendon that straightens the finger (extensor) is only rarely damaged by surgery and would cause the finger to droop at the tip.