



University of North Carolina Wilmington
Abrons Student Health Center

INSTRUCTION SHEET: SUBUNGUAL HEMATOMA

The Student Health Provider has treated you today for a subungual hematoma, a collection of blood underneath a fingernail or toenail. A subungual hematoma results from a blow to the nail: The blow breaks small blood vessels underneath the nail. Bleeding results, and a hematoma (a collection of blood) forms under the nail. Pressure builds up, and pain in the fingertip can be intense.

Treatment of a subungual hematoma involves making a small hole in the nail to release the blood. The pain and pressure are both reduced considerably.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR SUBUNGUAL HEMATOMA:

1. Keep the fingertip clean. Wash your finger several times a day. A band-aid over the nail helps keep germs and dirt out until the hole seals.
2. If your finger throbs, elevate it above the level of your heart. Over-the-counter pain medicines can be taken as needed.
3. If signs of infection appear, return to the Student Health Center or see your personal/referral doctor *promptly*. Signs of infection include: pus draining from the wound, increasing pain/swelling/redness, or red streaks running up the finger.
4. The hole and discoloration may take several months to grow out. Rarely will the whole nail fall off; most of the time, the nail remains in place.