

## A quick guide to toenail care

### *Before you start*

To cut your toenails, use good quality hinged clippers. These can be purchased from pharmacies. Don't use scissors as they are not strong enough to cut through toenails, you might slip and injure your toe, which could get infected. If you find your nails hard to cut because they are thick, try cutting them just after a shower, or after soaking your feet for a few minutes in warm soapy water. With cutting or filing you should aim to remove most of the white portion of the nail.



### *How to cut your toenails*

- Find somewhere with good lighting to cut your toenails.
- Sit down and lean your foot against a foot stool or low chair.
- Cut your toenail straight across. Do not cut down the sides of your nail. This is the main cause of ingrown nails as a piece of nail is often left behind which digs into the side of the toe and can become infected.

**Tip:** When using the clippers, only cut small sections at a time. This prevents you from cutting too much nail and causing a wound.

## How to file your toenails

If cutting your toenails is too difficult for you, or you have trouble seeing your feet, consider filing them once a fortnight.

- Use a medium to coarse emery board. These are available from pharmacies or discount stores.
- File straight across the end of your toenail to reduce the length.
- If your toenail is very thick, file across the surface of the nail to reduce the thickness, this should be in stages, file across for few times then check to make sure you don't file them too thin, which could cause some tenderness.

Tip: For metal files clean with a disinfectant after each use. For paper emery boards you can wipe them with a cloth dipped in warm water and a disinfectant. Discard after use if you have a fungal nail infection.

## How to make a nail file with a long handle

If you have trouble reaching your feet to trim your toenails, you can make your own nail file with a long handle. Buy some fine to medium grade sandpaper from a hardware store and glue a strip to a long ruler. Follow the filing instructions on the previous page.



## Need to see a podiatrist?

Look in the Yellow Pages under P or call Community Health Intake on 02 6207 9977 to see if you are eligible for treatment through ACT Health.

The Community Care Podiatry Service is supported by the Australian Government Department of Health. Visit the Department of Health website ([www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)) for more information.

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