



## Nail Care: Fingers and Toes

The only care your child's nails require is trimming. You can use a soft emery board, baby nail clippers, or blunt-nosed toenail scissors, but be very careful when using clippers or scissors because accidentally cutting the tip of your baby's finger will cause pain and bleeding.

A good time to trim nails is after a bath if your baby will lie quietly, but you may find it easiest to do when she's asleep. Keep her fingernails as short and smoothly trimmed as possible so she can't scratch herself (or you).

In the early weeks, her fingers are so small and her nails grow so quickly you may have to trim them twice a week. Also, as odd as it may sound, some parents bite their child's nails as a way of trimming them, which they should avoid doing to prevent the risk of a condition called herpetic whitlow (a finger or thumb infection caused by the herpes simplex virus).

By contrast, your baby's toenails grow much more slowly and are usually very soft and pliable. They needn't be kept as short as the fingernails, so you may have to trim them only once or twice a month. Because they are so soft, they sometimes look as if they're ingrown, but there's no cause for concern unless the skin alongside the nail gets red, inflamed, or hard. As your baby gets older, his toenails will become harder and better defined.

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**Source** Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5 (Copyright © 2009 American Academy of Pediatrics)

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