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## Clubbing of the fingers or toes

Clubbing is changes in the areas under and around the toenails and fingernails that occur with some disorders. The nails may also show changes.

### Considerations

Common symptoms of clubbing:

- The nail beds soften. The nails may seem to "float" instead of being firmly attached.
- The nails form a sharper angle with the cuticle.
- The last part of the finger may appear large or bulging. It may also be warm and red.
- The nail curves downward so it looks like the round part of an upside-down spoon.

Clubbing can develop quickly, often within weeks. It also can go away quickly when its cause is treated.

### Causes

Lung cancer is the most common cause of clubbing. Clubbing often occurs in heart and lung diseases that reduce the amount of oxygen in the blood. These may include:

- Heart defects that are present at birth (congenital)
- Chronic lung infections that occur in people with bronchiectasis, cystic fibrosis, or lung abscess
- Infection of the lining of the heart chambers and heart valves (infectious endocarditis). This can be caused by bacteria, fungi, or other infectious substances
- Lung disorders in which the deep lung tissues become swollen and then scarred (interstitial lung disease)

Other causes of clubbing:

- Celiac disease
- Cirrhosis of the liver and other liver diseases
- Dysentery
- Graves disease
- Overactive thyroid gland
- Other types of cancer, including liver, gastrointestinal, Hodgkin lymphoma

# **When to Contact a Medical Professional**

If you notice clubbing, contact your health care provider.

## **What to Expect at Your Office Visit**

A person with clubbing often has symptoms of another condition. Diagnosing that condition is based on:

- Family history
- Medical history
- Physical exam that looks at the lungs and chest

The provider may ask questions such as:

- Do you have any trouble breathing?
- Do you have clubbing of the fingers, toes, or both?
- When did you first notice this? Do you think it is getting worse?
- Does the skin ever have a blue color?
- What other symptoms do you have?

The following tests may be done:

- Arterial blood gas
- Chest CT scan
- Chest x-ray
- Echocardiogram
- Electrocardiogram (ECG)
- Pulmonary function tests

There is no treatment for the clubbing itself. The cause of clubbing can be treated, however.

## **Alternative Names**

Clubbing

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