

HABIT TIC

Habit tic is a term that refers to a condition which affects the nails. In this problem, a person unconsciously (habit) performs a repetitive movement (tic) which causes repeated rubbing of the nail cuticle. The main sign of this condition is a central groove or depression in the nail itself. It is most common to see this condition in the thumbs although other nails can be affected as well. It is also common for the same nail on both hands to be affected.

The misshapen nail forms because rubbing the cuticle disturbs the nail matrix. The nail matrix is a medical term for the root of the nail. These nail producing cells are located under the cuticle and are susceptible to injury from pressure. An example of such pressure is that caused by other fingers lightly rubbing the area. Other skin diseases or injuries that involve the nail producing cells of the matrix will also cause nail abnormalities.

The main treatment for this condition is to prevent any further injury in the area of the cuticle and nail matrix. In cases of habit tic it may be difficult to avoid this because it is an unconscious habit. Placing barriers like Band-Aids or tape over the cuticle area may prevent some of the damage to the nail matrix and remind you to stop. Just being aware of the issue can also help you prevent the irritation in the area. It is important to remember that nails grow very slowly and it may take months or even more than a year to see results. If you have any other questions regarding this condition, please ask before you leave the office.



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