

Changes to Your Nails

How will my treatment affect my nails?

During your treatment you may notice certain changes to your nails. For instance, they may become darkened or yellow. They may also become cracked and brittle, growing less and breaking more easily. Your nails may also develop lines related to cycles of chemotherapy. These lines are not permanent and will grow out with the nail, generally in about 6 months. The area around the nail bed may also become dry, cuticles may fray, and it is possible for the nail to lift off the nail bed.

Fortunately, most of these changes are not permanent and there are steps you can take to help prevent or ease some of these problems.

What can I do if my nails begin to change?

- Do not bite nails or cuticles. If you find this habit difficult to break, consider wearing thin white cotton gloves around the house to help you
- Clip nails short and don't rip or peel off loose cuticles. Cut them carefully with a clean pair of nail scissors, or use cuticle remover cream or gels and push your cuticles back gently. Massage cuticle cream into the cuticle area daily to help prevent dryness, splitting, and hangnails
- Do not use fake nails as they can trap bacteria. Also, do not use acrylics or other nail wraps. Use nail polish only if your nails are healthy and then use only non-acetone-based remover
- If you have a professional manicure, bring your own tools to help protect against infection
- Protect your nails by wearing gloves while doing chores around the house such as washing dishes or gardening
- You should know that your nail may lift away from the nail bed. In time, it will return to normal, but you should still be careful as this will make the nail vulnerable to falling off. Because the nail is not tightly attached, it can also become a site for bacteria to enter. Be sure to maintain good hygiene to avoid infection

Name: _____

Institution/Group: _____

Phone: _____

Notes: _____

Discuss any changes you experience during or after your treatment with your doctor or nurse. Make sure you always inform them of any changes you plan to make in your diet or daily regimens.

The information contained herein is not comprehensive and is intended only as a guide.