

NAIL BITING

The common use of the mouth for an activity other than speaking, eating, or drinking is nail biting. Nail biting, also known as onychophagy or onychophagia (or even erroneously onychophagia), is an oral compulsive habit. It is sometimes described as a parafunctional activity. Nail biting is very common, especially amongst children.

It tends to show up in people who are nervous, anxious or feeling down. It's a way to cope with these feelings. You may also find yourself doing it when you're bored, hungry or feeling insecure. Most nail biting is automatic -- you do it without thinking.

Nail biting typically begins in childhood and can continue through adulthood, and the side effects can be more than cosmetic. Repeated nail biting can make the skin around your nails feel sore, and it can damage the tissue that makes nails grow, resulting in abnormal-looking nails.



To help you stop biting your nails, dermatologists recommend following these tips.

1. Keep your nails trimmed short. Having less nail provides less to bite and is less tempting.
2. Apply bitter-tasting nail polish to your nails. Available over-the-counter, this safe, but awful-tasting formula discourages many people from biting their nails.
3. Get regular manicures. Spending money to keep your nails looking attractive may make you less likely to bite them. Alternatively, you can also cover your nails with tape or stickers or wear gloves to prevent biting.
4. Replace the nail-biting habit with a good habit. When you feel like biting your nails, try playing with a stress ball or silly putty instead. This will help keep your hands busy and away from your mouth.



5. Identify your triggers. These could be physical triggers, such as the presence of hangnails, or other triggers, such as boredom, stress, or anxiety. By figuring out what causes you to bite your nails, you can figure out how to avoid these situations and develop a plan to stop. Just knowing when you're inclined to bite may help solve the problem.

6. Try to gradually stop biting your nails. Some doctors recommend taking a gradual approach to break the habit. Try to stop biting one set of nails, such as your thumb nails, first. When that's successful, eliminate your pinky nails, pointer nails, or even an entire hand. The goal is to get to the point where you no longer bite any of your nails.

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