

## **Maruthi Pediatrics**

110 Lattner Ct  
Suite 100  
Morrisville NC-27560  
Ph: 919-462-6206 Fax: 206-350-4492  
After hours service Ph: 1-866-629-0269  
[www.maruthipediatics.com](http://www.maruthipediatics.com)

### **Nail Biting**

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#### **Is nail biting common?**

Nail biting is a common habit. It is usually not a serious problem for children. Almost half of all teens bite their nails. Most children who bite their nails eventually stop the habit, but it may last well into adulthood.

#### **Does nail biting cause problems?**

Most children that bite their nails have no problems. In some cases, nail biting may cause:

- A bacterial infection
- Warts around the nail bed
- Bleeding
- More colds and other infections by spreading germs from fingers to the lips and mouth
- Permanent nail damage

#### **Why does my child bite his nails?**

Some of the reasons children bite their nails include:

- Stress, frustration, or anxiety
- Boredom
- Seeing other children do it
- Poorly trimmed nails

#### **How can I help my child?**

Punishing or shaming a child for nail biting is not helpful. Try to figure out why your child is biting his nails.

- If your child is under a lot of stress, try to reduce the stress. For example, if being bored, watching scary videos, or problems at school stresses your child, talk about ways to handle those situations.
- Cutting long nails helps some children. Nails can also be smoothed so that they do not bother your child.
- Direct your child's attention away from nail biting. It may help if your child keeps his hands busy, eats carrot sticks, or chews gum.
- If you have an older child who wants to stop nail biting, help your child make a plan to break the habit. It may help to wear gloves, put Band-Aids on the fingernails, or put a bitter-tasting chemical on the nails. It may also help to have something else to do with their hands, such as playing with a "worry stone" or small ball in their pocket. Let your child decide what might help her break the habit. Praise your child when she makes progress.