

I Should Not Bite My Nails!

Have you ever thought about your nails and the job they do? The hard surface of your nails helps to protect your fingers and your toes - plus, your fingernails make it easy to scratch an itch or pick something up. You had fingernails and toenails before you were even born.

Where do nails come from? Nails start in the nail root that's hidden under the cuticle. When the cells at the root of the nail grow, the new nail cells push out the old nail cells. These old cells flatten and harden. The newly formed nail then slides along the nail bed, (the flat surface under your nails). The nail bed sits on top of tiny blood vessels that feed it and give your nails their pink color. They also grow slowly - about one tenth of an inch each month, so it takes about three to six months to completely replace a nail!

Where the nail meets your skin is the cuticle. Cuticles help to protect your new nail as it grows

out from the nail root. The lunula (the Latin word for "moon" is the pale half circle just above the cuticle.

Most kids need an adult to help you trim your fingernails and toenails. For this you use a nail clipper or a pair of nail scissors. To smooth the jagged edges, you use a nail file or emery board that works like sandpaper. Fingernails need to be trimmed straight across and slightly rounded at the top. Well trimmed nails can keep you from biting or picking at them.

Do you bite your nails? That is not a healthy habit. A lot of kids do it because they are anxious or nervous. By biting the nails, you are breaking the skin and possibly bringing germs into these openings in your skin. In fact, some people bite their nails and cuticles down so far - they bleed!

That can definitely lead to an infection.

There are also germs under your fingernails. When you bite them, these germs can go into your mouth. Think about where your hands have been all day like touching your shoes, touching the floor, etc. You don't want those germs getting into your mouth!

If you want to stop bit-



ing your nails, hooray!! You may not even realize that you are biting them! Ask your family or friends to tell you if they notice you biting your nails. If you are strong willed and can stop just by concentrating on not doing it - you are a lucky one. If you find that you can't stop this habit, ask your parent to buy a special colorless nail polish that makes your nails taste awful! That way you will quit biting them when they taste badly. It may also help you to polish your nails and keep them looking good as an incentive to quit.

