

## A Teen Warns Against Nail Biting After Almost Losing Her Fingertip Due to Infection

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Photo credit: TikTok / Jewelyn Butron

From Prevention

- *A Texas teenager shared a warning to all nail biters on TikTok.*
- *She almost lost her fingertip due to a nail-biting related infection called paronychia.*
- *Lauren Nichols shared photos of the infection and detailed her surgery and recovery on her account.*

A teenager in Texas is recovering after she almost lost her fingertip due to a nail-biting habit. Lauren Nichols opened up about the whole ordeal on TikTok. “Nail biters, stop what you’re doing,” she said in a video. “I almost got the tip of my finger amputated because I bite my nails.”

According to Nichols, it all started on January 8 when she noticed a “green spot” on her cuticle. Turns out it, was paronychia, a nail infection caused by trauma to the cuticles. She saw a doctor a few days later when the spot got bigger and became painful.

Nichols said she was given antibiotics, but it didn’t really help. In the meantime, her finger kept getting more swollen and the green spot grew bigger. “It got pretty painful,” she said. Eventually, the teen needed surgery to remove the bump.



Now, Nichols told *People*, her finger is doing better, but she still has to fight the urge to bite her nails. “My finger looks a little weird but it healed fine,” she said. Breaking the nail-biting habit hasn’t been easy, though. “I’ve always been a more anxious person, and [nail-biting] is one of the ways I’ve coped,” she said. Nichols said she’s bought a fidget spinner to try to help herself and, when she gets the urge to bite her nails, she tries to remember what she went through.



“It’s still kind of tender to the touch, so if I ever start trying to bite my nails or think about it, it’s still there as a reminder to not,” she explained. “I definitely still think about it, but I’ve stopped myself many times because that was not a fun experience.”

## How common is paronychia?

It’s actually pretty common, according to the U.S. National Library of Medicine. Paronychia can happen when the area around your nails is injured from things like biting it off, picking a hangnail, or trimming or pushing back a cuticle.

The infection can be caused by a bacteria, candida (a type of yeast), or fungus. Paronychia usually gets better with treatment, like antibiotics or antifungal medication, and soaking your nail in warm water two or three times a day, but in some rare cases, there can be complications, per the U.S. National Library of Medicine. Those include developing an abscess, a permanent change in the shape of the nail, or a spread of the infection to the tendons, bones, or bloodstream.

“It would have to be very advanced to cause osteomyelitis, a serious bone infection that may require intravenous antibiotics,” says **Gary Goldenberg, M.D.**, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York. “My recommendation is to see your dermatologist as soon as you notice an issue with the nail and skin around it.”

Still think it’s worth the risk of biting your nails? The U.S. National Library of Medicine has this to say: “DO NOT bite or pick the nails.” (Their caps, btw.) So...maybe take a pass.