



Splinters



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- An opening near the skin where the splinter entered
- Pain may not be felt and the splinter may or may not be visible
- Bleeding, swelling, and/or pain at the wound area, especially for splinters stuck deep under the skin

CAUSES

Splinters are pieces of wood, glass, metal, or other matter that lodge under the skin.

TREATMENT

Remove splinters so they don't cause an infection. Self-care takes care of most splinters. A doctor may need to remove a splinter if it is not visible, if it is deep in the skin, or if it is in a person with diabetes.

TRIAGE QUESTIONS



With a splinter, are any of these problems present?

- Red lines or streaks that spread from the wound
- Swelling, redness, or warmth at the wound site
- Pus
- Fever

NO
↓

YES ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



With a splinter, are any of the following present?

- The splinter is deeply embedded in the skin, you cannot get it out, and you have diabetes.
- The splinter is still embedded in the skin, you cannot get it out, and it is painful.

NO
↓

YES ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Is your tetanus immunization (DTaP or Td) not up to date?

NO
↓

YES ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



With a splinter, is a fever present?

NO
↓

YES ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

Prevent Getting Splinters

- Wear shoes outdoors at all times and whenever you walk on unfinished floors.
- Sand, varnish, and/or paint handrails to keep from getting splinters in the hands.
- Clean up all broken glass and metal shavings around the house. Be careful when you handle broken glass. Wear hard-soled shoes when glass has been broken.
- Wear work gloves when you handle plants with thorns, sharp tips, or spines.

Remove a Splinter

- Wash your hands, but don't let the area around a wooden splinter get wet. A wooden splinter that gets wet will swell. This will make it harder to remove.
- Sterilize tweezers. Place the tips in a flame. Wipe off the blackness on the tips with sterile gauze if you use a lit match for the flame.
- Use the tweezers to gently pull the part of the splinter that sticks out through the skin. It should slide right out. If necessary, use a magnifying glass to help you see close up.

If the splinter is buried under the skin, sterilize a needle and gently slit the skin over one end of the splinter. Then, use the needle to lift that end and pull the splinter out with the tweezers.

- Check to see that all of the splinter has been removed. If not, repeat the above step.
- If you still can't get the splinter out, soak the skin around the splinter in a solution made with 1 tablespoon of baking soda mixed in 1 cup of warm water. Do this 2 times a day. After a few days, the splinter may work its way out.

- Once the splinter is removed, clean the wound by washing it with soap and water. Blot it dry with a clean cloth or sterile gauze pad. Apply a sterile bandage.
- To remove a large number of close-to-the-surface splinters, such as cactus spines, apply a layer of hair removing wax or white glue, such as Elmer's, to the skin. Let it dry for 5 minutes. Gently peel it off by lifting the edges of the dried wax, gel, or glue with tweezers. The splinter(s) should come up with it.
- Contact your doctor if you still have the splinter(s) after using self-care measures.