

Position Statement and Clinical Practice Advisories Regarding the Role of Nail Care and Use of Electronic Rotary Tools

For the purposes of this statement the following definitions will apply:

Basic Nail Care: Filing and trimming of nails for patients with: nails of normal thickness, intact sensation, circulation and no history of disease processes which pose a high risk for complications. Ensure referral to appropriate practitioner for additional care needs, including the provision for patient education including risk factors, teaching daily self- inspection of feet and injury prevention.

Intermediate Nail Care: Complex care prescribed by an authorized Licensed Independent Practitioner (LIP), use of electric nail file, clipping and thinning of unusually long or thick finger or nails for patients with high risk for complications, debridement including manual, mechanical, surgical, and chemical, paring of small, non- painful corns, calluses that may require use of a curette, nail clippers or electronic rotary tool or a paring device.

Advanced Nail Care: Excise ingrown toe or finger nail, hangnail, order corrective footwear, advanced wound care management, packing or partial excision of nail plate to treat an ingrown toenail, paring of painful or complicated callus or corn. For the purposes of this statement, this level of intervention is within the scope of an LIP to include Nurse Practitioners who have met the standards under this scope of practice decision making guide and Wound and Ostomy Nurses with documented education/competency validation.

Electronic rotary tool: High speed rotating tool, usually hand-held and powered by cord or battery, which has changeable bits, such as sanding disk, drum or planer. Also known as brand name Dremel™.

The above definitions derived from Arizona Board of Nursing Advisory Opinion: Foot Care, 7/12.
Pedicure: Cosmetic treatment of the feet and toenails. Provided for the purposes of appearance only.

Certifications and training resources: There are National Certifications in Foot Care for Nurses both in the USA and in Canada. The American Foot Care Nurses Association offers certification and has developed standards for foot care, the Wound, Ostomy and Continence Certification Board also provides certification and has developed standards of care. Several Boards of Nursing (BONs) in states such as Arizona, Oregon, Louisiana, and Massachusetts have authored advisory rulings (equal to our interpretive statements) that foot care is part of nursing practice if the care is provided in accordance with the statutes and rules of the state. The RN must have documented education, either obtained through their employer or acquired independently to perform intermediate foot care. Education must occur and be documented appropriate for the level of care provided to the client.

Prior to performance of any intervention, care activity or procedure the RN must be aware of the policies and procedures of their employer. These policies and procedures must identify the assessment and documentation requirements of the intervention, to include absolute “stops” when the consultation of an LIP is required. Informed consent must always be obtained when providing intermediate or advanced foot care. Advanced foot care is only to be provided by an authorized Licensed Independent Practitioner (LIP).

Am I allowed to trim nails? ?

Without advanced education you may provide “Basic Nail Care” (foot and finger) as defined in “Basic Nail Care” above.

Am I allowed to use a Dremel ™?

With advanced training and if prescribed by an authorized Licensed Independent Practitioner (LIP) you may provide this care as defined under “Intermediate Foot Care” above. See Certifications and training resources for suggestions regarding training.

Am I allowed to trim out ingrown toenails?

No. This level of intervention is within the scope of an LIP to include Nurse Practitioners who have met the standards under this scope of practice decision making guide and Wound and Ostomy Nurses with documented education/competency validation. See “Advance Nail Care” above.

Specialty Organizations:

American Foot Care Association

References:

American Foot Care Association

Oregon State Board of Nursing

Arizona Board of Nursing Advisory Opinion: Foot Care, 7/12.