

# TIP: THE PAINFUL SUBUNGAL HEMATOMA

**Ouch!** A patient presents to your clinic with a sore, throbbing finger due to a subungual hematoma after slamming it in the car door this morning.

**TIP:** If the patient has intact nail folds and the injury occurred in the past 48 hours all you need is an 18-gauge needle and 5 minutes to have that patient feeling a whole lot better!

**TRICK:** The trick to relieving painful pressure caused by the subungual hematoma is to make a small hole in the nail to allow blood to escape. This is called **nail trephination**. To create the hole twist a large bore needle with gentle pressure into the nail above the lunula. You will know that you are in the right spot when blood begins to escape and the patient feels some relief. Typically a digital block is not required for this procedure.



- Don't forget to consider if tetanus prophylaxis is required for this injury.
- If you are concerned about a possible fracture order an x-ray as prophylactic antibiotics may be required.

For more info see these useful sites:

1. BC Emergency Network: [https://www.bcemergencynetwork.ca/clinical\\_resource/subungual-hematoma-treatment/](https://www.bcemergencynetwork.ca/clinical_resource/subungual-hematoma-treatment/)
2. <https://canadiem.org/subungual-hematomas-and-trephination/>

