
Protecting the diseased digits: Home remedy for the homemaker



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CLINICAL CHALLENGE

Chronic paronychia is a common yet difficult condition to treat.¹ The mainstay of therapy is strict irritant avoidance, which is much more important than topical or oral medications.² Homemakers, maids, and food handlers constitute the majority of those affected, but they find it difficult to refrain from wetting their hands or contacting irritants. Even rubber glove use at work is not a feasible option because of practical difficulties. In addition, the rubber gloves themselves might act as agents entrapping water, sweat, and irritants on diseased nail fold.

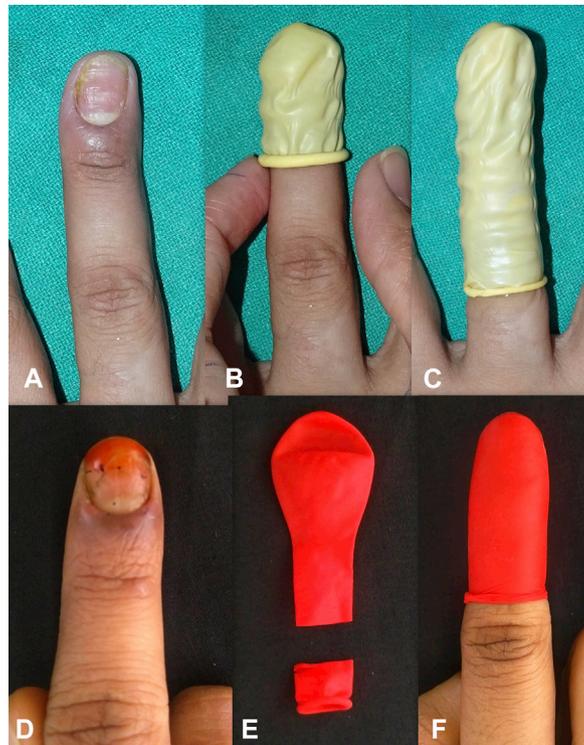


Fig 1. Protective devices for fingers of patients with chronic paronychia. **A-C**, Use of commercially available finger cots, which are rolled down and worn over the affected finger before doing any wet work. **D-F**, Patient using a small-sized balloon to cover the affected digit. For this, the balloon's tight neck is cut snugly and is worn over the digit.

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SOLUTION

Finger cots (also known as finger condoms) and small-sized latex balloons are practical options for protecting fingertips in such cases. We have found these 2 readily available tools to be useful, practical, and acceptable by our patients. Finger cots are sturdy and typically designed to cover cuts and wounds on fingers. These are promoted for sexual health as well. Balloons are thinner latex, but much cheaper and easier to source. They can be easily discarded after every use. Both fit snugly on the digits (Fig 1). We advise our patients to wear them on affected fingers before engaging in activities involving water and irritants (eg, soap, detergent, vegetables, and fruits). They provide a waterproof environment (especially over the affected proximal nail fold and the underlying cul-de-sac) without compromising dexterity (Fig 2). The advantages over kitchen gloves include economy, easy availability, and practicality. We advise their use on affected fingers till the primary condition improves or to prevent recurrences.

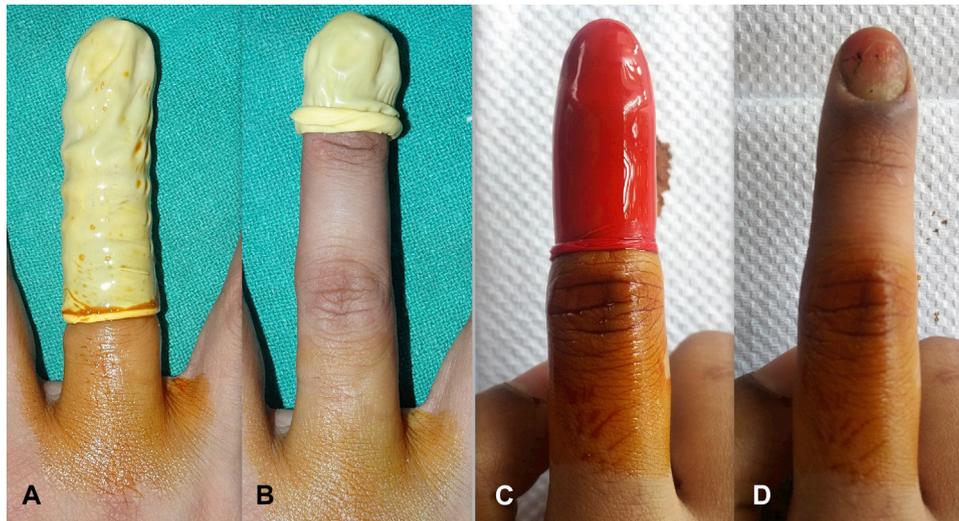


Fig 2. Use of finger cot or small-sized balloon helps prevent entry of water or other irritants. This was demonstrated by dipping the finger wearing the protection in povidone iodine solution. Both the finger cot (A and B) and the balloon (C and D) effectively prevented povidone iodine solution contacting the affected proximal nailfold.

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