



# NAIL DIAGNOSIS GUIDE



*What your nails reveal about your health*

*A holistic reference guide to 11 key nail signs,  
their root causes, and what they may mean for your body.*

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# INTRODUCTION

Your nails are far more than a cosmetic feature — they are a direct reflection of your internal health. Formed from keratin protein, nails grow from the matrix beneath the cuticle and are nourished by blood flowing through the fingertips. Any disruption to nutrition, circulation, organ function, or hormonal balance will often show up in the nail long before other symptoms appear.

Nail diagnosis has been used in Ayurvedic medicine, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and naturopathic practice for centuries. This guide consolidates the most clinically relevant nail signs and the underlying root causes they point to.



## White Spots on Nails

*Small, irregular white spots or patches on the nail plate. May be single or multiple, appearing on one or several nails.*

### ROOT CAUSES

- › Zinc deficiency — essential for nail matrix cell division
- › Calcium deficiency — disrupts normal keratin formation
- › Liver stress — impairs mineral delivery to nail beds
- › Minor trauma — most common cause; grows out naturally
- › Mild fungal infection — especially near the free edge



## Weak, Thin or Brittle Nails

*Nails break, peel, split, or crack easily. May feel thin, soft, or papery, or develop horizontal splits at the edges.*

### ROOT CAUSES

- › Biotin (Vitamin B7) deficiency — cornerstone nutrient for nail strength
- › Silica deficiency — provides the structural matrix for nails
- › Low thyroid function — slows protein synthesis and circulation
- › Iron deficiency — reduces oxygen to the nail matrix
- › Magnesium deficiency — impairs enzyme activity for protein production
- › Chronic stress — diverts resources away from growth
- › Poor gut absorption — nutrients never reach nail matrix
- › Dehydration or chemical overexposure — strips nail moisture

**Important:** This guide is for educational purposes only. Always consult a qualified healthcare practitioner before making changes to your health routine.



Yellow or Thickened Nails

Nails develop yellow discolouration from light lemon to deep amber. May become thickened, slow-growing, and slightly curved.

ROOT CAUSES

- Lymphatic stagnation — slow drainage of toxins from extremities
- Liver congestion — toxin accumulation in peripheral tissues
- Fungal infection — yellow-brown discolouration with crumbling texture
- Respiratory conditions — can cause yellow nail syndrome
- Diabetes — elevated blood sugar impairs circulation
- Psoriasis — yellowish pitting alongside discolouration



Pale or Colourless Nails

Nail beds appear very pale, whitish, or lack the normal healthy pink tone. May look washed out even when pressed and released.

ROOT CAUSES

- Anaemia (iron deficiency) — reduced haemoglobin reaching the nail bed
- Poor circulation — cold hands, Raynaud's phenomenon, or cardiovascular weakness

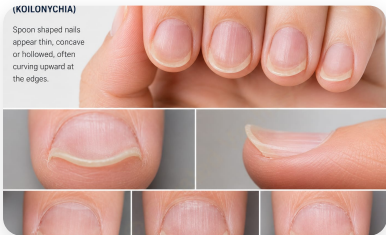


Vertical Ridges on Nails

Fine vertical lines running from cuticle to tip. Can be faint or deeply grooved, sometimes with surface roughness.

ROOT CAUSES

- B-vitamin deficiency — particularly B12 and folate
- Poor digestion and malabsorption — nutrients never reach the nail matrix
- Ageing — mild ridges are a normal part of natural ageing
- Magnesium deficiency — impairs enzymatic processes in nail matrix
- Autoimmune conditions — lichen planus and alopecia areata can cause ridging



Spoon-Shaped Nails

Nails lose their normal convex curve and develop a concave, spoon-like depression. The nail edges may curve upward.

ROOT CAUSES

- Iron-deficiency anaemia — the most well-established cause
- Other conditions affecting blood oxygen levels



### Clubbed Nails

The fingertip becomes bulbous and rounded — the nail curves dramatically downward. The angle between the nail and skin at the base flattens or reverses.

ROOT CAUSES

- Major red flag for chronic low oxygen — the body remodels peripheral tissue in response
- Lung or heart issues — impaired blood oxygenation

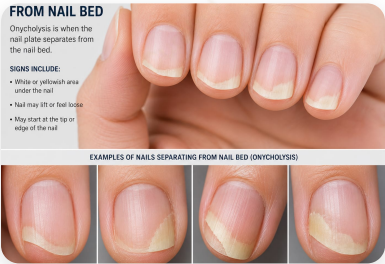


### Splinter Haemorrhages

Tiny dark red or brown streaks beneath the nail, running vertically like small splinters. Do not blanch when pressed.

ROOT CAUSES

- Silent warning for heart valve inflammation
- Systemic vascular issue — inflammation or micro-bleeding in capillaries
- Trauma — the most common cause; gardening, sport, or minor injury



### Nails Separating from the Nail Bed

The nail lifts away from the nail bed starting at the free edge, creating a white or opaque gap. May affect one or multiple nails.

ROOT CAUSES

- Thyroid overfunction (Hyperthyroidism) — the classic nail manifestation
- Fungal overgrowth in the gut — fungal metabolites weaken the nail-bed bond



### Cloudy, Opaque or Milk-Glass Nails

Nails appear frosted, milky, or translucent-grey rather than a healthy clear-pink tone. Surface looks dull and lacks transparency.

ROOT CAUSES

- Body is struggling to produce enough protein
- Usually due to chronic kidney or liver stress



### Dark Streaks or Spots Under Nails

Dark brown, black, or red-brown streaks, bands, or spots visible beneath the nail plate. May appear as a single streak or irregular spots.

ROOT CAUSES

- Do not ignore — while often harmless, could indicate melanoma
- Important to get checked by a dermatologist to rule out serious issues

QUICK REFERENCE SUMMARY

Nail sign → likely condition at a glance

| #  | NAIL SIGN                                                                                                           | KEY ROOT CAUSES                            |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1  |  <b>White Spots</b>                | Zinc, calcium, liver stress                |
| 2  |  <b>Brittle / Thin</b>             | Biotin, silica, thyroid, iron, magnesium   |
| 3  |  <b>Yellow / Thick</b>             | Lymph, liver, fungal, diabetes             |
| 4  |  <b>Pale</b>                       | Anaemia, poor circulation                  |
| 5  |  <b>Vertical Ridges</b>            | B-vitamins, malabsorption, magnesium       |
| 6  |  <b>Spoon-shaped</b>               | Iron deficiency, blood oxygen conditions   |
| 7  |  <b>Clubbed</b>                    | Chronic low oxygen, lung/heart disease     |
| 8  |  <b>Splinter Haemorrhages</b>    | Heart valve inflammation, vasculitis       |
| 9  |  <b>Separating (Onycholysis)</b> | Hyperthyroidism, gut fungal overgrowth     |
| 10 |  <b>Cloudy / Milky</b>           | Kidney or liver stress, protein deficiency |
| 11 |  <b>Dark Streaks</b>             | Melanoma risk, internal bleeding, trauma   |

This guide is for educational and informational purposes only. It does not constitute medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek professional advice for any health concerns.