

Bleeding Claw

A vet explains how to cut a cat's toenails and stop bleeding if the claw is clipped too short.

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M.

Q. What should I do if I cut a toenail too short and it bleeds?

Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, D.V.M., says: If you regularly trim your cats toenails, it is a good idea to have some cauterizing powder or styptic pencils available. These items will stop bleeding. If you don't have either of these items available, touch the bleeding nail to an ice cube. This will cause the blood vessel to constrict and bleeding to slow. Cats lose a lot of blood from toenails that are broken or cut too short, but a cat will not lose so much blood that it's dangerous.

When trimming your cats nails, use nail clippers specifically designed for pets. Cat nails are round, so when human nail clippers are used a cats nail gets crushed. If you look for the quick (the blood vessel in the nail that looks like a pink triangle) before cutting and cut below it, you will not have a problem with bleeding. If you have a problem seeing your cats toenails, vertically press the pad of each toe between your thumb and forefinger: this will exteriorize the nail. Always trim the nails in the same sequence so that you don't miss any of them. Cats normally have five toes on each front foot and four on each back. To play it safe when starting out, only cut the tip of the nail, and when you're more confident cut more. Toenails grow back every two to three weeks.

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