

and is composed mainly of keratin, the fiber-shaped protein found in skin and hair. The keratin in natural nails is more durable than the keratin in hair or skin.

A healthy nail is firm and flexible, shiny, and slightly pink. Its surface is usually smooth and unspotted, with no splits or deep grooves. A healthy nail is translucent, with the nail bed's pinkish or beige color showing through.

## ✓ Check In

2. What is the technical term for the natural nail?
3. Natural nails are comprised mostly of what protein?
4. Describe the appearance of a healthy nail.

### LO 3 Label nail structures.

## Nail Structures

The natural nail is divided into several major parts, including the nail folds, proximal nail fold, nail plate, nail bed, matrix, cuticle, eponychium, hyponychium, and specialized ligaments. Together these parts form the natural nail unit (**Figure 5-1**). The nail bed, nail fold, eponychium, paronychia, and hyponychium are collectively referred to as the **perionychium**.

### Nail Folds

**Nail folds** are skin folds that surround the nail plate. These folds form the **nail groove** on the nail's sides. The **lateral nail fold**, also known as the *sidewall*, is the skin fold overlapping the nail's side.

### Proximal Nail Fold (PNF)

The **proximal nail fold** (PNF) is the entire skin flap covering the matrix, extending from the visible nail plate's edge to the first joint of the finger or toe. This tissue folds back underneath itself to create a tissue flap that shields and protects this sensitive area. Keratinized proximal nail tissue is where the nail matrix exists. Cells proliferate inside the matrix and keratinize to form the nail plate.

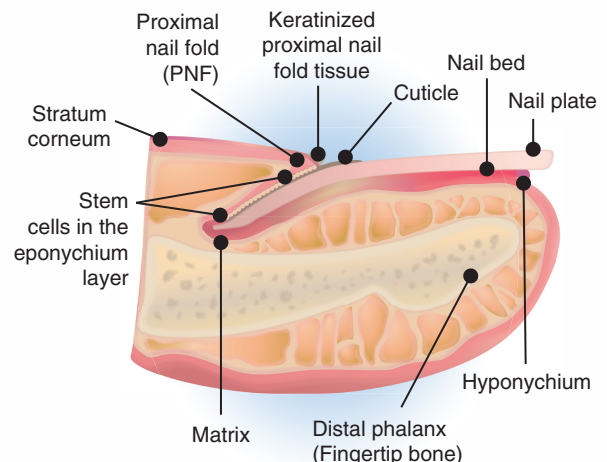
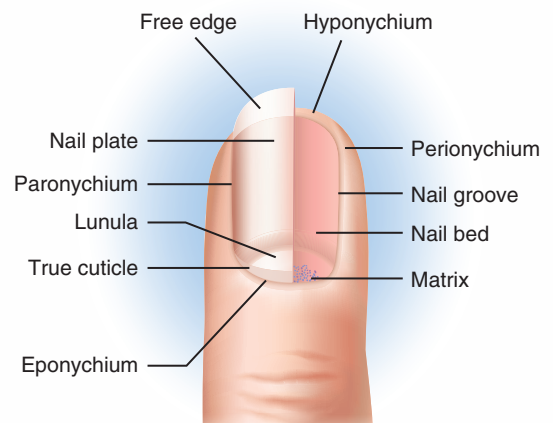


Fig. 5-1 Natural nail structure.