

Hammertoes

Symptoms

Hammertoe is the name given to a toe, which “curls” and shaped like a “hammer”. It can develop in the second, third or fourth toes, however is most common in the second toe. Hammertoes are classified as flexible or rigid. The flexible hammertoe joint allows movement and the rigid hammertoe has limited movement and can become very painful. The longer you have a hammer toe the more rigid and “curly” the deformity can become.

Corns and calluses often form on the hammertoe because the deformed toe constantly is rubbing against the shoe. Other signs include calluses under the balls of the feet, cramping and weakness. Sometimes a painful area can develop between toes or on the other side of the toe.

Hammertoe treatment is dependent on the severity of the deformity. Sometimes hammertoes can be prevented from developing further by a shoe insert called an orthotic.

Reducing pain and pressure may involve footwear that has plenty of room in the toe area and using hammertoe pads. Because tendons have tightened in the development of the hammertoe, stretching exercises can be helpful. If the deformity is severe surgery may be considered.

Causes

- Aging
- Flat feet
- Nerve damage resulting from diabetes, stroke or arthritis
- Poor fitting shoes and high heels

What can I do?

You can avoid many foot problems with shoes that fit properly. Here’s what to look for when buying shoes

- Adequate toe space – avoid shoes with pointed toes
- Low heels- provide better balance and avoids back problems
- Adjustability – laced or Velcro shoes can be expanded as your feet swell throughout the day
- Breathability – avoid vinyl or plastic shoes, these do not breathe when your feet perspire
- Buy shoes at midday- your feet expand during the day
- Measure both feet while standing – your shoe size will change as you age – especially the width

Clients with diabetes or poor circulations are encouraged to seek professional help.

If you are looking for a foot care nurse, refer to the foot care nurse website at www.footcarenurse.ca



Information provided by:

**Manitoba Association
of Foot Care Nurses**

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