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Hammertoes

The term "hammertoe" describes the condition in which the toe is bent into a claw-like position due to the buckling of one or more of the toe joints. Often the joints become enlarged and stiffen.

Although any toe may become a hammertoe, it most often affects the second through fifth toes, known as the lesser digits. Hammertoes are more common in women than men.

Many factors can contribute to the formation of a hammertoe. Some factors are: Heredity, Trauma, Arthritis, Wearing shoes that are too tight in the toe box, Flat feet, High arched feet and Various neurological disorders. There are different symptoms and types of hammertoes.



Flexible Hammertoes are still moveable at the joint. These types are much easier to treat because they are still in the developmental stage. Rigid Hammertoes are more developed and more serious than the flexible type. The tendon has become tight, the joint is misaligned and immobile. Symptoms may include one or more of the following: Toe is slightly to significantly raised, Overlapping or under lapping of toes, Pain from shoe wear on the top of the hammertoe, Corn or callous forms on hammertoe joints, Redness and swelling of the toe joint, Limited or painful motion of the toe joint, Ball of foot pain at the base of the affected toe.



Treatments

If left untreated, claw toes and hammertoes can become serious fixed deformities. In many cases, the inside of the shoe rubs against the bent toe joints, gradually causing calluses to form on the tops of the toes. The metatarsal heads support the body weight and pressure calluses and open sores (ulcer) can develop on the sole of the foot. When deformities reach this stage, the toes are fixed in a bent position and cannot be easily straightened. For this reason, it is important to obtain treatment for claw toes and hammertoes when they first begin to develop, before they become fixed.

There are several modalities of treatment for hammertoes depending on the severity. Padding and taping helps to minimize pain and restore proper alignment and Anti-inflammatory drugs and/or cortisone injections may be prescribed for acute pain, and to ease joint swelling. Orthotic devices may be prescribed to reduce symptoms and prevent worsening of the condition. Surgery is often indicated depending on the severity of the hammertoe. Stretching exercises may help to lengthen extremely tight tendons. Proper footwear and stockings with enough room in the toe box may provide relief.



This Issue is dedicated to the 2996 people who lost their lives on September 11th, 2001

September



Footfalls

Your Feet Aren't Supposed to Hurt

Remember that foot pain is not normal. Healthy, pain-free feet are a key to your independence. At the first sign of pain, or any noticeable changes in your feet, seek professional podiatric medical care. Your feet must last a lifetime, and most Americans log an amazing 75,000 miles on their feet by the time they reach age 50. Regular foot care can make sure your feet are up to the task. With proper detection, intervention, and care, most foot and ankle problems can be lessened or prevented. *Source: American Podiatric Medical Association



Hammertoe Tips

Apply a commercial, non-medicated hammertoe pad around the bony prominence of the hammertoe. This will decrease pressure on the area.

Wear a shoe with a deep toe box.

If the hammertoe becomes inflamed and painful, apply ice packs several times a day to reduce swelling.

Avoid heels more than two inches tall.

A loose-fitting pair of shoes can also help protect the foot while reducing pressure on the affected toe, making walking a little easier until a visit to your podiatrist can be arranged. It is important to remember that, while this treatment will make the hammertoe feel better, it does not cure the condition. A trip to the podiatric physician's office will be necessary to repair the toe to allow for normal foot function.

Avoid wearing shoes that are too tight or narrow. Children should have their shoes properly fitted on a regular basis, as their feet can often outgrow their shoes rapidly.

See your podiatric physician if pain persists.

Your podiatric physician/surgeon has been trained specifically and extensively in the diagnosis and treatment of all manner of foot conditions. This training encompasses all of the intricately related systems and structures of the foot and lower leg including neurological, circulatory, skin, and the musculoskeletal system, which includes bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles, and nerves.

*Source: American Podiatric Medical Association



It takes a fool to test how deep the water is with both feet. - J. Wallace Day

Dr. Boyle and Dr. Graham are accepting new patients. If you suffer from any type of foot pain, you may contact our office at 740-775-7800 to schedule an appointment.