

Orthopaedic Connection

Claw Toe and Hammer Toe

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Claw Toe

In this deformity the toe or toes bend upward from the joint at the ball of the foot and downward at the middle joint. The toe can look somewhat like an animal claw.

One or two may be caused by poor fitting shoes. If all toes are affected especially if it's both feet, the cause may be a neurological disorder. This can cause weakened foot muscles and imbalances.

Calluses form and wearing shoes becomes painful.

Treatment of Claw Toe

This condition unfortunately does not respond to home treatment. Padding under the ball of the foot might relieve some pressure there. Changing shoes to the most comfortable you can find and padding the corns and calluses are worth trying.

If the claw has not become too rigid, it helps to use your hands to stretch the toes into their normal position. You would need to do this 2 – 3 times per day.

Surgery is needed if the claw toe(s) is not controlled by simple treatment and is too painful.

Hammer Toe

You stand barefoot and look down and the second toe does not lie flat, but stays bent at the middle joint. It can affect the third and fourth toes too, but usually the second especially if it is longer.

A bunion that pushes the big toe sideways into the second toe is a cause.

A mallet toe which occurs at the outer joint is a variation.

Cause – high heels or poorly fitting shoes can cause it. Often though, it just happens.

Treatment Of Hammer Toes

- Shoe that fits the foot, not foot having to fit into a shoe like a high heel.
- Don't ignore it as it will become rigid.
- Stretch the toe with your hands.
- Treat the painful corn or callus.
- Buy a strap to hold the toe down.
- If you know you have bad circulation or diabetes, don't treat it yourself. See your doctor.
- Surgery if all else fails.

Well, there you have a short course in toe problems that can be really nasty and a painful problem. Bottom line: Don't wait too long to get help.

My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.

Wow! Your window to the Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal world opens at www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It contains 1) The Website Library of Information 2) Your Orthopaedic Connection 3) GCH Archive of all previous articles.

You will be amazed at all the helpful information it contains.

All of the information pertains to everything I treat in the office and hospital.

Be well. Good health, good life, all the best to you.

Dr. Haverbush