

HAMMERTOES

Description

A hammertoe is a bending or buckling of the digit. As the problem increases, the toe becomes prominent on the top of the foot, and blistering or callusing may develop over the knuckle. In the most extreme cases an ulcer will develop. This can be especially dangerous for patients with circulation problems or diabetes.

There are many causes of hammertoes including wearing tight shoes or high heels, or a muscle imbalance caused by diabetes or other neuromuscular conditions. Hammertoes occur on all the digits, but of particular nuisance are those on the little toe. Hammertoes on the little toe can cause not only a painful callus on top of the toe, but often a soft callus between the little toe and the toe next to it. These can be very tender--especially in shoes.

Treatment

Conservative treatment involves accommodating the bony prominence with extra-depth shoes, corn pads, and other devices designed to straighten the toe. Many patients come into the podiatrist's office periodically and have the callus/corns professionally trimmed down. Unfortunately this treatment is rarely permanent and the callus/corns soon return.

Surgery may be indicated for patients whose corns return quickly after trimming, or in those who don't get any pain relief from trimming or padding the area. Also, those with diabetes or circulation problems may benefit from surgical correction to prevent more serious complications. Hammertoe surgery is an out-patient procedure.