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## Hammer Toes

A hammer toe can best be described as abnormal flexion in the joint of the lesser toe nearest the foot. It can affect one toe or numerous lesser toes.

The causes of hammer toes:

- 1) Inappropriate footwear
- 2) Flat feet
- 3) Highly arched feet
- 4) Hereditary factors
- 5) Bunions
- 6) Long second toe
- 7) Various diseases e.g. rheumatoid arthritis
- 8) Trauma such as stubbing the toe

Symptoms of hammer toes:

- 1) Hammer toes can be subject to cramping and on occasion can cause cramping within the foot or even the leg
- 2) A corn may form on top of the toe as a result of pressure from a shoe
- 3) Bursitis that is inflammation of a small sac of fluid under the skin and overlying the joint. The top of the joint will appear red and swollen
- 4) Ulceration can form particularly where the circulation is reduced



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- 5) Infection can be a complication of hammer toes particularly where general health is not good

Treatment and advice for hammer toes:

- 1) Consideration of footwear is very important. A deep toebox with soft leather uppers is ideal. With certain medical conditions customised shoes are often required
- 2) Good fitting hose which is not restrictive is advised
- 3) Certain types of felt padding can be used to reduce pressure loading
- 1) Applying an appropriate moisturising cream is often helpful
- 2) The use of silicones, which can be purchased pre-packed in the form of tubes
- 3) Podiatrists can mould silicone rubber to individual toes, which is often very successful
- 4) Routine footcare to address corns and callouses
- 5) Specific footcare for episodes of bursitis, ulceration or infection associated with hammer toes
- 6) Consideration of a surgical procedure such as an arthroplasty for a permanent solution.
- 7) Where there are numerous hammer toes and they are associated with biomechanical factors, orthoses can be very helpful in assisting with re-alignment, particularly for flexible hammer toes.