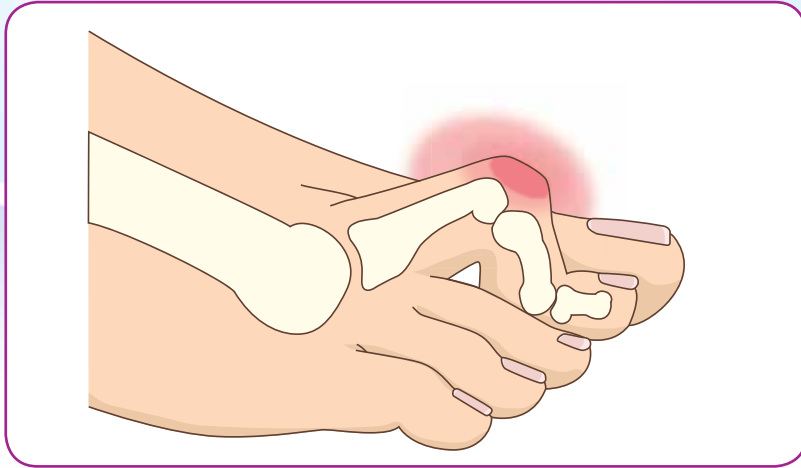


LESSER TOE PROBLEMS



WHAT IS IT?

Hammer toes, retracted toes and clawed toes are caused by muscle weaknesses causing instability of the foot as you walk. Therefore, some of the muscles in the leg overwork to try to stabilise the foot instead. These leg muscles are attached to the toes at the very tips and

this causes the bones to buckle and curl over, making the shape of hammer, retracted and clawed toes. These toe shapes often lead to painful lesions (corns and callus) on the top, bottom and tips of the toes.

DIAGNOSIS

These toe shapes are easy to diagnose as they are obvious to the trained eye. The cause of the specific toe shape you have may require your podiatrist to take a thorough medical history and examination of the foot as many things can cause these problems. Diabetes, arthritis, a stiff ankle joint,

nerve damage, an injury, your foot type and even poorly fitting shoes can lead to toe deformities.

It is important that your podiatrist finds the root cause of the problem as this will greatly affect the treatment plan.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treatment of any painful corns or callus on the toes with gentle scalpel debridement and/or applying padding, felt, gel or silicon devices to offload the area from shoe friction is commonly used to reduce discomfort. Tubular foam is also a useful quick option to reduce friction to the area.

Your podiatrist will look at your footwear and might advise a deeper toe box to accommodate the shape of your toes.

Treating the cause is also very important. This might be in the form of orthotic insoles either to correct or to support the foot shape.

This will depend on the duration of the problem and rigidity of the toes.

As well as supporting the foot it is important to also stretch and rehabilitate the muscles in the leg that are overworking and strengthen those muscles that are weak in the foot. Depending on the nature of the problem, you may be given some exercises to do.

Over time, the tendons of the over worked muscles will shorten so surgery to release/lengthen the tendons is an option for more long term or chronic problems.



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