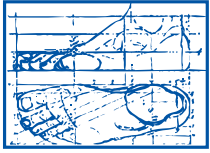


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BUNIONS AND HAMMERTOES

Normal Foot Anatomy

With proper care, your feet will carry you 115,000 miles* or more in your lifetime. That's three times around the world! But 75 percent of us experience foot pain or discomfort at some time.* Foot problems are so common that many people accept them as normal and do not seek medical treatment. The good news is that most foot problems can be successfully treated.

What causes foot problems?

Abnormal functioning of the foot, such as incorrect joint and tendon motion, can cause pressure on and within the foot. This pressure, in turn, can create bunions, hammertoes, neuromas, corns and calluses.

For example, incorrect motion can lead to bone deformities --- like bunions and hammertoes --- which then cause shoes to fit tighter. Tight shoes can result in neuromas, corns, and calluses.

This booklet addresses some of the common causes and treatments of these conditions.

Bunions

A bunion is an enlarged bone on the side of the big toe that is angled outward. Depending on the severity of the bunion, the big toe may be angled mildly or sharply toward the other toes.

What causes bunions?

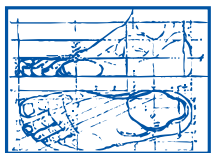
Bunions can be caused by:

- Hereditary tendency
- Foot injury
- Neuromuscular disorder



*Source: American Podiatric Medical Association

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- Congenital deformity (a deformity that is present at birth)
- Loose joint movement
- Poorly fitting shoes

Each year, about six percent of Americans have foot injuries, bunions, and flat feet or fallen arches.*

How do bunions develop?

Most bunions form as the big toe responds to the abnormal pressure on the foot joints. For example, your foot may roll excessively inward during walking. Over time, this stress may cause the big toe to move toward the other toes. This, in turn, pushes the big toe joint outward.

Bunions may develop along with inflammatory joint diseases such as osteoarthritis. They also often develop along with other foot problems, including hammertoes, corns and calluses.

Do they need to be treated?

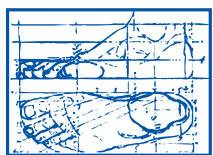
Yes. If left untreated, a bunion can become painful and may even interfere with standing and walking.

Prevention and treatment of bunions

- Wear roomy and comfortable shoes.
- Wear self-adhesive cushions to ease painful pressure and friction.
- Wear shoe inserts (orthotic devices) prescribed by your podiatrist and molded to your feet to help your feet function better.
- Medication such as corticosteroid injections and pain relievers may be used for temporary relief of symptoms.

*Source: American Podiatric Medical Association

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- In some cases, surgery (bunionectomy) is needed to remove the bunion and realign the big toe.

Hammertoes

A hammertoe is an arched toe, the result of an abnormal contraction or “buckling” that leaves the toe in a claw-like position. Once stiffened into position, hammertoes rub against shoes and cause painful corns and calluses.



What causes hammertoes?

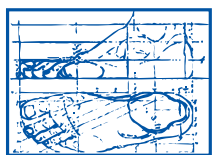
A hammertoe usually stems from muscle imbalance, but often aggravated by poor-fitting shoes or socks that cramp the toes. Often, a foot with a bunion will also have a hammertoe, cause by the bunion pushing the big toe under a second toe that then becomes arched.

Those with rheumatoid arthritis, high arches or a tendency to rotate their feet inward when walking are especially susceptible to hammertoes.

Prevention and treatment of hammertoes

- Wear roomy and comfortable shoes and socks.
- Use protective pads or moleskin to cushion skin against painful pressure and rubbing.
- Wear shoe inserts (orthotic devices) prescribed by your podiatrist and molded to your feet to help your feet function better. Some people need to wear specially fitted or prescription shoes.
- Medication such as corticosteroid injections and pain relievers may provide temporary relief of symptoms.
- Surgery may be needed to correct a severe hammertoe.

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Neuromas

A neuroma is a benign growth that occurs when the nerves in the foot are pinched and inflamed. It is commonly found between the third and fourth toes. Symptoms include pain, burning, tingling or numbness between the toes and in the ball of the foot.

What causes a neuroma?

Abnormal bone structure, foot injury or tight shoes can cause a neuroma. Women who wear high heels are especially susceptible.

Prevention and treatment of neuromas

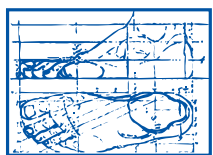
- Neuromas aren't always preventable, but they are treatable
- Wear comfortable shoes --- those with wide toes, low heels and soft, thick soles.
- Wear shoe inserts (orthotic devices) prescribed by your podiatrist and molded to your feet to help your feet function better.
- Place lamb's wool or corn cushions between toes to ease pressure.
- Medication (such as corticosteroids) may be part of your treatment plan.
- Surgery may be needed to remove the neuroma.

Support for your arches

If you have flat feet (low arches) , walking may put painful pressure on them every time you step. Even flat feet that don't hurt can be the cause of future problems, such as bunions, hammertoes, pain in the heels, arches, legs and lower back. High arches can also cause problems, including achy feet, heel and arch pain and calluses due to poorly fitting shoes.

Orthotic devices can often relieve the pain caused by flat feet or high arches. Over-the-counter products, such as insoles and arch supports, may help ease the pain of a mild condition.

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If you experience persistent arch pain, talk to your podiatrist.

About 5 percent of Americans have corns or calluses each year.*

Six steps to healthier feet

Taking good care of your feet is a daily investment in your lifelong health and comfort. You can prevent or minimize most problems by adopting a routine of daily foot care and following these simple guidelines.

- Wear comfortable shoes and socks that fit your feet.
- Wash and dry your feet thoroughly, especially between the toes.
- Keep your toenails trimmed short and straight across.
- Apply cream or lotion to feet to keep skin smooth and supple.
- Wear clean socks or stocking and avoid wearing the same shoes two days in a row.
- See your podiatrist for any severe or persistent foot problems.

Footnote

Your feet deserve your full attention and often the care of your podiatrist. Prompt foot care may help prevent the later onset of painful knee, hip and lower back problems, which can develop when you change the way you stand and walk in order to relieve the pressure on hurting feet. If you have persistent foot pain, see your podiatrist right away.

*Source: American Podiatric Medical Association