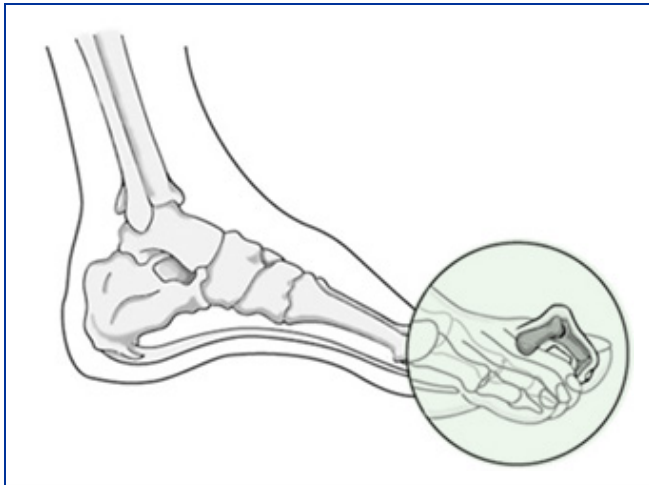


Claw Toe

People often blame the common foot deformity claw toe on wearing shoes that squeeze your toes, such as shoes that are too short or high heels. However, claw toe also is often the result of nerve damage caused by diseases like diabetes or alcoholism, which can weaken the muscles in your foot. Having claw toe means your toes "claw," digging down into the soles of your shoes and creating painful calluses. Claw toe gets worse without treatment and may become a permanent deformity over time.



Symptoms

- Your toes are bent upward (extension) from the joints at the ball of the foot.
- Your toes are bent downward (flexion) at the middle joints toward the sole of your shoe.
- Sometimes your toes also bend downward at the top joints, curling under the foot.
- Corns may develop over the top of the toe or under the ball of the foot.

Evaluation

If you have symptoms of a claw toe, see your doctor for evaluation. You may need certain tests to rule out neurological disorders that can weaken your foot muscles, creating imbalances that bend your toes. Trauma and inflammation can also cause claw toe deformity.

Treatment

Claw toe deformities are usually flexible at first, but they harden into place over time. If you have claw toe in early stages, your doctor may recommend a splint or tape to hold your toes in correct position. Additional advice:

- Wear shoes with soft, roomy toe boxes and avoid tight shoes and high-heels.
- Use your hands to stretch your toes and toe joints toward their normal positions.
- Exercise your toes by using them to pick up marbles or crumple a towel laid flat on the floor.

If you have claw toe in later stages and your toes are fixed in position:

- A special pad can redistribute your weight and relieve pressure on the ball of your foot.
- Try special "in depth" shoes that have an extra 3/8" depth in the toe box.
- Ask a shoe repair shop to stretch a small pocket in the toe box to accommodate the deformity.

If these treatments do not help, you may need surgery to correct the problem.

Last reviewed: September 2012



Co-Developed by the American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society

AAOS does not endorse any treatments, procedures, products, or physicians referenced herein. This information is provided as an educational service and is not intended to serve as medical advice. Anyone seeking specific orthopaedic advice or assistance should consult his or her orthopaedic surgeon, or locate one in your area through the AAOS ["Find an Orthopaedist"](#) program on this website

Copyright 2012 American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons

Foot and Ankle Exercise Conditioning Program

Download this PDF ([/PDFs/Rehab_Foot_and_Ankle_4.pdf](#))

OrthoInfo

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
9400 West Higgins Road
Rosemont, IL 60018
Phone: 847.823.7186
Email: orthoinfo@aaos.org