

# Podiatry In Motion

Bay Area Foot Care

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Going the distance with you!

## Hammertoes

### What is a Hammertoe?

A hammertoe is considered a deformity that is caused by your toe bending or curling downward instead of pointing forward.

Any toe on your foot can be affected; however, typically the second and third toes are involved. It is possible for a hammertoe to be present at birth, but it typically develops over time due to arthritis or wearing poorly fitting shoes.

A hammertoe can cause a deal of discomfort, but in most cases they are treatable.

### Causes

Each toe contains two joints that allow it to bend at the middle and bottom.

When the middle joint becomes dislocated a hammertoe occurs.

Common causes of joint dislocation include the following:

- Injury to the toe
- Arthritis
- High foot arch
- Poorly fit shoes
- Tightened tendons or ligaments in the foot
- Pressure from a bunion

### Symptoms

A hammertoe can cause discomfort upon trying to stretch or move the affected toe or those around it and while walking.

Symptoms associated with a hammertoe can be mild or severe.

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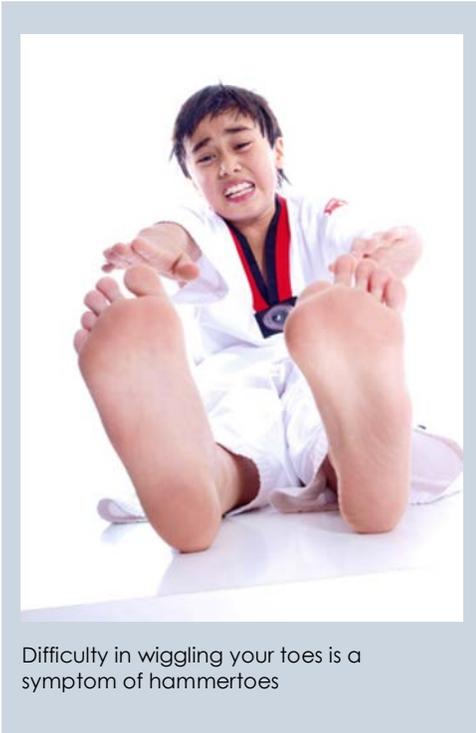
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Hammer toes can cause discomfort

## Hammer toes (Cont'd from previous page)



### Mild Symptoms

- Toe that is bent downward
- Calluses or corns

### Severe Symptoms

- Claw-like toes
- Difficulty in walking
- Inability to wiggle toes or flex foot

### Prevention

A hammertoe can be prevented by wearing properly fitting shoes. It is recommended that you visit a

local shoe store to have the length and width of your foot measured if your shoes fit too snug.

Wearing shoes with a heel over 2 inches can increase pressure on your toes, causing them to bend.

They can also cause the formation of a high arch or corns. It is thus recommended to wear shoes with a heel that is 2 inches or less.

## Tips to Relieve Pain and Discomfort

Whether you are just noticing the first symptoms of a hammertoe or are awaiting a visit with your physician, the following measures can be taken to achieve relief:

- Wear shoes with a wide toe box. Keep in mind there should be at least one-half inch of space between the tip of your shoe and your longest toe.
- Avoid heels that are over 2 inches
- Be sure your footwear is appropriate for your activity
- Purchase commercial, non-medicated hammertoe pads to help relieve painful pressure. Some have the option for a gel lining that can prevent toe irritation caused by the shoe
- Relieve pain by gently massaging the toe.



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## Hammertoes (Cont'd from previous page)

- Apply ice packs as needed to reduce painful swelling.

### Treatment Options

The treatment for hammertoe is dependent upon the severity of your symptoms. Several options are available for safe and effective treatment and include:

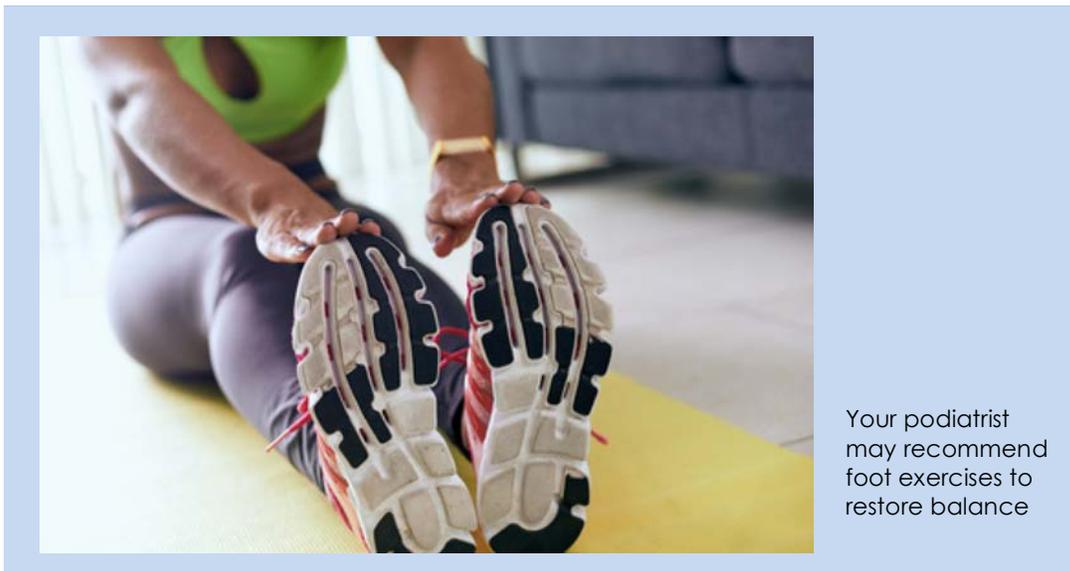
- Use of properly fitting shoes to pad any prominent areas surrounding the bony point of the toe to aid in pain relief.

- Certain medications may be prescribed to decrease inflammation, pain and swelling.

At times, a podiatric physician may use cortisone injections to provide relief of acute pain.

- Custom-made inserts can be inserted into your shoes; these are developed under the guidance of a podiatrist.

The inserts can prevent worsening of a hammertoe and decrease pain.



Your podiatrist may recommend foot exercises to restore balance

- Your specialist may recommend specific foot exercises to help restore muscle balance. In very early stages, splinting of the affected toe may be helpful.
- If suggested treatment options have been unsuccessful a surgical intervention may be required. There are several surgical techniques that can be used to treat hammertoes and they are typically performed in an out-patient surgery center.

- In cases that are less severe and don't require an advanced surgical treatment, your physician may choose to remove a small piece of bone at the affected joint and realign the toe.

Remember, in any case if you have a question related to foot care, your podiatrist is just a call away! ♦

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## Special Thanks

Thanks for reading our newsletter;  
we hope you've gained valuable  
insights!

For any enquiries regarding foot  
care or injuries, do feel free to  
contact **Bay Area Foot Care** (see  
details left).

Thanks for your support!