



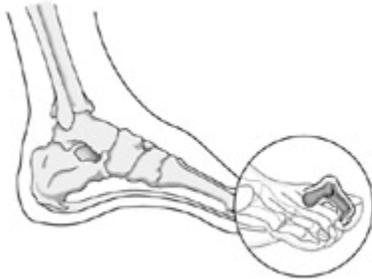
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Claw Toe

Claw toe is a deformity usually of the middle toes (2nd-4th) that causes toes to curl down, like a claw digging into the ground. There is usually excessive extension at the joint at the base of the toe (ball), and flexion at both joints at the end of the toe. Calluses can form under the ball of the foot, over the top of the toe (from rubbing on shoes), or on the tip of the toe.



Symptoms:

Deformity is usually the first symptom. Pain can develop later, usually due to pressure on the tip of the toe or of the ball of the foot. Difficulty finding shoes that are comfortable can follow.

Cause:

Claw toes may be caused by narrow shoes or high heels, but can also be associated with neurological disorders that cause nerve damage in the foot, such as diabetes or alcoholism.



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Diagnosis:

A careful history and physical examination will diagnose claw toes. A neurological exam will help to determine if there is an associated nerve disorder. Plain x-rays are obtained to evaluate the severity of the deformity, and to assess for arthritic changes at the joints that can affect treatment. Advanced imaging is almost never needed.

Treatment:

Claw toes are best treated with prevention—wearing properly sized shoes and avoiding high heels. When deformity or pain develops, wearing shoes with a large toe box may accommodate for the deformity, and avoid pressure on the toes. Stretching exercises may help early on when the deformity is flexible. Orthotics and physical therapy are not usually indicated. When conservative treatment fails, and there is progressive pain or deformity, surgery may be recommended.

There are a variety of surgical procedures to treat clawtoe deformities, including joint reconstruction and fusion of the affected joints. Surgery is done in an outpatient surgery setting, often under local anesthetic, and healing may take several months.