

## What is a Hallux Limitus?

Hallux Limitus, is when the big toe joint becomes stiff and often painful with movement.

This is usually caused by osteoarthritis (wear and tear arthritis) of the joint at the base of the big toe.

In some cases the joint becomes completely stiff and does not move at all: Hallux Rigidus.



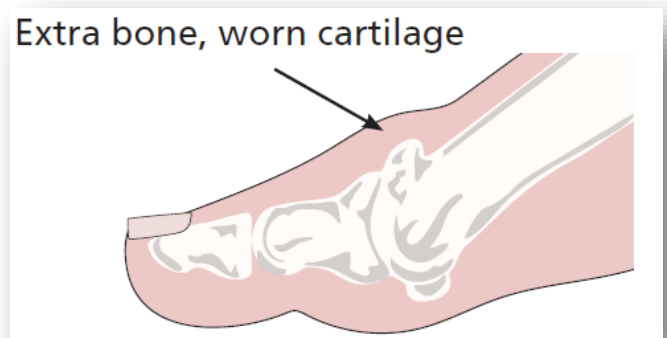
## Symptoms Can Include:

- Pain on movement of your big toe.
- Limited movement of the big toe joint due to pain and stiffness.
- An enlarged big toe joint which can rub on shoes which are too narrow.
- Increased pain on wearing shoes with higher heels, or which have very flexible soles.

## What Causes It?

In many cases it may not be clear why you have developed Hallux Limitus but it can be due to:

- Direct Injury.
- Secondary to conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis or gout.
- Normal aging process
- Altered foot function.
- Overuse or repeated minor trauma, for example jobs that involve a lot of kneeling or squatting & certain sports such as football.



## What Can I Do About It?

### Wear the right footwear

- Wear well-fitting shoes with a low heel and laces or an adjustable strap.
- Shoes with stiffer soles which are slightly rocker shaped across the forefoot can limit bending of the joint during walking and reduce painful symptoms.
- Avoid shoes with thin/flexible soles.
- Avoid high heels or narrow shoes.  
See our footwear advice leaflet (Rocker soles) for more information.



**Ice-** put an ice pack (or bag of frozen peas) in a tea towel on your joint for up to 20 minutes every 2 to 3 hours. (*Leaflet available*)

**Gentle massage and movement of the forefoot-** this will help reduce stiffness of the joint and increase mobility.



**Insoles-** over the counter or prescribed insoles may help support and offload the big toe joint. (*Leaflet available*)

A pharmacist can recommend the best painkiller. This might be tablets, cream or gel you rub on the skin. Paracetamol and ibuprofen can help to ease mild pain.

None of these treatments will cure Hallux Limitus but they should help you to manage your symptoms.

**NB:** If you have persistent redness, heat, pain and swelling that cannot be explained by increased activity or rubbing from footwear please seek medical advice.

### What happens next?

In the first instance you should try these first line treatments for 12 weeks. If you notice an improvement continue to follow the treatments until your symptoms become manageable.

If your symptoms have not started to improve within 12 weeks or you are having difficulty following the advice. Please contact **Podiatry and Orthotics Department** on **01633 615225 option 1** or email [risca.podiatry@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:risca.podiatry@wales.nhs.uk)

**“This document is available in Welsh /  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**