Podiatry & Orthotics Department

Toe Deformities

Patient Information

Overview.

There are a number of different toe deformities, some of which are mobile – that is they can be straightened out and rehabilitated – and some that are fixed at one or more of the joints and cannot be straightened without surgery.

Causes of Toe Deformities.

Direct Injury to the toe.

Repeated low level injury – Football / occupation

Weak foot muscles

Tight calf muscles – Back of the leg

Weak Calf muscles

Poorly fitting footwear

Congenital - Family history

Arthritis

Normal aging process

Certain health condition – Diabetes



What Are The Symptoms?

- Painful thickened and inflamed soft tissues - from footwear rubbing.
- Painful callus formed from excess long-term friction or pressure.
- Pain under the ball of the foot from increased pressure.
- Deformed thickened toe nails.
- Black toe nails.
- Sore areas between toes – from rubbing against adjacent toe.
- Ulceration – Breaks in the skin.

Treatment.

Self-help management and home treatments are the simplest and often the best way to manage your symptoms. Follow the information below and links and to each detailed section.

Footwear:



It is most important to avoid shoes that are poorly fitting, too worn or simply the wrong style or shape for you. This places unnecessary pressure on your toes resulting in the formation of painful skin and nail lesions.

- Avoid thin, flat-soled or high-heeled shoes.
- Avoid shallow/small toe box or pointed shoes with seams over prominences.
- Wearing wide-fitting shoes with fastenings (laces or adjustable straps) that are correctly measured are best.
- For more information see 'Footwear advice' leaflet.

Toe protectors and Spacers:



Can be helpful to reduce rubbing to the top and between toes. Protectors are ideally used for toes that cannot be straightened by hand or while you are rehabilitating your toe. Spacers help improve toe alignment and provide pressure relief from adjacent toes.



There are several types available at your local Chemist or online.

www.simplyfeet.co.uk/footcare/gel-cushioning/toe-cushioning.html

- **Pain Relief:** please discuss this with your pharmacist or GP to gain the correct over-the-counter or prescription pain medication for you.
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Rehabilitation Of Your Toe Deformity.

You can work on improving the alignment / position of your toes following the advice below. You are likely to gain a better outcome on toes that are mobile, but some improvement can be achieved with most toe deformities.

Toe Stretch Exercises.

This is a simple technique that can improve foot pain and improve toe function, especially when combined with the strength and stretching exercises highlighted below. Stretches should not be painful but will be mildly uncomfortable during the stretch.

Calf Muscle stretching – Calf muscle strengthening – Foot strength Exercises

(Leaflets available).



Your big toe is made up of 2 segments and your smaller toes are made up of 3.

Level 1: Find a comfortable sitting position and start to work on straightening one segment at a time –by applying a gentle stretch to the toe. Hold the stretch for 10-15 seconds and relax. Repeat this 3 times and 3 times per day.

Once you can comfortably straighten 1 segment move onto straightening 2 segments at a time and finally straighten the whole toe.

Level 2: Once you are able to straighten the whole toe – hold the deformed toe straight and pull downwards until a stretch is felt on top of the foot– hold for 15 seconds and relax. Then pull the toe upwards until a stretch is felt on the ball of the foot – hold for 15 seconds and relax. Repeat 3 times in each direction 3 times per day.

Finish each group of exercises by pulling up on the toes to feel a stretch under the ball of your foot and the arch and pull downwards to feel a stretch the top of your foot. Hold each stretch for 10-15 seconds and relax – repeat 3 times.





Your toe pain should start to improve after a few weeks but it is important to continue for 6- 8 weeks to maintain those improvements. Discontinue if you have new pain or your symptoms worsen.

If you have persistent pain or lesions that cannot be resolved by these methods please seek further advice. If you need to speak to one of our team please contact the Podiatry department on: **01633 615225 option 1** or email risca.podiatry@wales.nhs.uk

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