

There are three main forms of toe abnormalities in the human foot:

- Claw toes
- Hammer toes
- Mallet toes

Claw toe. A claw toe is caused by one of the tendons in the foot contracting. The first bone is raised and the second two bones point downwards.



Hammer toe. The three bones in the toe should form a straight line but with a hammer toe the first bone is slightly raised, the second bone tilts downwards and the bone at the tip is almost flat – this condition is also caused by one of the tendons in the foot contracting.



Mallet toe. Again, this condition is caused by one of the tendons in the foot contracting. The first two bones are straight but slightly raised and the bone at the tip is pointed downwards.



- They occur throughout life, although are most often seen in the seventh and eighth decades.
- Women are affected four to five times more often than men.

Toe deformities are caused by a variety of factors:

- Associated with a high arched foot that may be inherited or may not be the result of an underlying neurological condition.
- Genetic.
- Poorly fitted shoes - usually the result of wearing shoes that are too short and too narrow. Many people have second toes that are longer than their big toes. If they wear shoes sized to fit the big toe, the second toe has to bend to fit into the shoe, causing mallet toe. High-heeled shoes with pointed toes are also a major cause of claw toes.
- Bunions.
- Rheumatoid arthritis.

Tendon imbalance. (When the foot cannot

function normally, the tendons may stretch or tighten to compensate leading to toe deformities.)

- Traumatic injuries of the toes

Recommended treatments

- Reducing corns and calluses.
- Using protective sleeves to protect the toe made from e.g. foam or gel
- Wearing supportive orthotics/insoles to help relieve pressure on toe deformities.
- Using splints or small straps to realign the affected toe.
- Correct footwear, wearing shoes with a wider and deeper toe box.
- Injecting anti-inflammatories to relieve pain and inflammation.
- Surgery.