

Welcome to Queensferry Podiatry

Established in 1999, we have dedicated over 25 years to providing a professional and welcoming podiatry service. Our expertise includes:

- Routine issues, such as nail problems, hard skin and corns.
- Diabetic foot care and check-ups.
- Musculoskeletal problems.
- Orthotic fitting.
- Nail surgery.

- ✓ Our podiatrists are degree trained.
- ✓ Registered with the Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC).
- ✓ Members of the Royal College of Podiatrists.

Individual Advice:



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Book online:
www.queensferrypodiatry.com



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Toe Deformities Hammer, Claw and Mallet Toes



Guidance for Patients



www.queensferrypodiatry.com

What is a Hammer, Claw, and Mallet toe?

Hammer, mallet, and claw toes are deformities where toes bend abnormally at one or more joints, often due to tight shoes or muscle imbalances.



A **hammer** toe is when the middle joint bends abnormally downward—creating a hammer-like shape. This is most commonly seen in the second toe but can occur in any of the smaller toes. They can be flexible, semi-rigid, or rigid which determines the most effective treatment.

A **claw** toe is when the last two joints of your toe are bent like a claw and becoming inflexible. The condition usually happens to the four smaller toes of your foot and it's the middle and end joints (the joints furthest away from your ankle) that buckle.

A **mallet** toe has an abnormal bend or buckle in the top toe joint nearest to the toenail. This causes the tip of the toe to curl or point down instead of lying flat. Flexible mallet toes are bent, but they can still bend back toward their normal shapes. Rigid mallet toes are frozen in their bent positions. and this type can be trickier to treat.

What causes toe deformities?

The change in the shape of your toes occurs as a result of an imbalance between the muscles and tendons which hold your toes straight and those that bend the toes. There can be several reasons for these changes:

- ill-fitting footwear
- inflammatory conditions (e.g. rheumatoid arthritis)
- trauma
- bunions
- neuromuscular conditions
- peripheral neuropathy leading to a muscle imbalance

Symptoms?

At first, these toe deformities may maintain their flexibility but eventually the tendons of the toe can contract and tighten, causing the toe to become permanently bent. Your shoes can rub against the raised portion of the toe and cause:

- pain from wearing shoes
- trouble moving the affected toe
- toe stiffness
- a change in skin color and swelling.
- growth of corns and calluses from the affected toe rubbing against shoes or against the ground

What can help?

Footwear - wear shoes with extra depth in the toe area. Don't wear shoes that are too tight or shoes with high heels.

Podiatry treatment - can treat corns and callous caused by the shoe rubbing on the toe.

Strapping/taping - such as Zinc Oxide, can be used to help support your toe. This can be a useful short term treatment that can help reduce your symptoms.

Devices - specialist toe splints or gel pads can help straighten the affected toe, relieve pressure, and protect skin from irritation.

Exercises - if your toe is still flexible, exercises such as crumpling a towel with your toes, helps to stretch and strengthen your toe muscles and may alleviate your symptoms or prevent them from getting worse. Please see our website for videos of some exercises to try.

www.queensferrypodiatry.com/further-information/

Surgery Treatment - in advanced cases of toe deformities, especially those involving rigid or arthritic joints, surgical intervention may be considered which may involve:

- arthroplasty - removal of part of the joint to restore flexibility
- arthrodesis: permanent joint fusion for long-term correction
- tendon transfer: rebalancing muscle forces for improved toe alignment