

TOE DEFORMITIES

There are many different types of toe deformity found in children. The majority of misshapen toes are caused by the position of the unborn child with in the womb or mechanical problems with the feet rather than years of wearing poor fitting shoes. Toe problems may be divided into 'inherited' or 'acquired' problems. Below are a few common ones together with a brief description, cause, and possible treatment.

Congenital Curly Toe: This usually involves the fourth or fifth toe which under or overlaps the adjacent toe. This may improve with age though sometimes simple exercises, provided by your Podiatrist can improve their shape.

Bone Problems: For example, extra or fewer toes, small or larger toes (micro or macrodactyly) or toes joined together (syndactyly). These are usually only a cosmetic problem and rarely require surgical intervention.

Acquired problems develop after birth and are usually secondary to other problems that the child already has. For example:

Hallux Abducto Valgus (HAV) and Digiti Quinti Varus (DQV):

The big toe (HAV), or the little toe (DQV) joint bulges outwards like a bunion and the toe can overlap its neighbour. Treatment may include splinting, insoles, surgery and footwear advice - see your Podiatrist.

Hammer, Claw, Retracted, and Mallet Toes: These are very common toe shapes seen in people of all ages. They can be caused by neurological disorders like cerebral palsy, or mechanical problems with the foot like flat feet, or finally, poorly fitting footwear. A podiatrist will suggest exercises or give devices to help to support the toe. Surgery may be indicated. These toe shapes can cause blisters or hard skin to form on areas of high pressure. Hard skin is rare in children but can be controlled by rubbing it off with a file, and either protecting the sore area of skin or wearing shoes that don't press on the toes. Otherwise see your Podiatrist.

Trigger Toe: The big toe appears to be pulled back into a 'z' shape when looking side on. This is mostly due to one muscle over-pulling and is commonly seen in high arched feet.

Hallux Limitus/Rigidus: The big toe has a limited range of motion (or none) at its first joint. This can be painful during walking or if high heeled shoes are worn. The cause is either trauma to the joint (like stubbing of the toe), long or short first metatarsal or a mechanical problem with the whole foot. Treatment may include orthoses (insoles) from your Podiatrist or referral for a surgical opinion.

Adducto Varus Toes: Some or all of the lesser toes may appear to point inwards rather than point outwards in a straight manner. This is found in some flat-foot types and may be correctable with insoles or toe splints.

If you have any concerns please make an appointment to see your Podiatrist at one of our clinics.

