

Mallet Toes

Definition

Many disorders can affect the joints in the toes, causing pain and preventing the foot from functioning as it should. A mallet toe occurs when the joint at the end of the toe cannot straighten. Excessive rubbing of the mallet toe against the top of the shoe can lead to pain and the development of a corn. The tip of the toe is often turned down against the shoe causing pressure and discomfort.

Cause

The development of mallet toes is often caused by bone and muscle imbalances. These imbalances become exaggerated in people with active lifestyles. For example, people who are constantly on their feet or participate in athletic activities are more likely to develop mallet toes.

Arthritis can also lead to many forefoot deformities including mallet toes. Mallet toes can cause extreme discomfort, and can be aggravated if restrictive or improperly fitting footwear is worn for a prolonged period of time.

Treatment and Prevention

Any forefoot problems that cause pain or discomfort should be given prompt attention. Ignoring the symptoms can aggravate the condition and lead to a breakdown of tissue, or possibly even infection. Conservative treatment of mallet toes begins with accommodating the deformity. The goal is to relieve pressure, reduce friction, and transfer forces from the sensitive areas.

Shoes with a high and broad toe box (toe area) are recommended for people suffering from forefoot deformities such as mallet toes. This prevents further irritation in the toe area from developing. Other conservative treatment includes forefoot supports such as gel toe caps, gel toe shields and toe crests. Gel forefoot supports provide immediate comfort and relief from common forefoot disorders without drying the skin.

If the problem persists, consult your foot doctor.



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