

# Don't Put Up With Pain From Hammertoes

(NAPSA)—After years and years of walking, running and wearing tight-fitting shoes, many senior citizens are finding that chronic foot pain is keeping them from being as active as they'd like to be.

A common source of foot pain in older adults is hammertoes, in which one or more toes are bent at the joints. They are caused by structural changes in the foot that occur over time in some people. The bent toes press on the inside of the shoes, causing corns on top of the toes and calluses on the bottoms of toes or on the ball of the foot. Corns and calluses can make it difficult for someone with hammertoes to find comfortable shoes.

In early stages, hammertoes are flexible and pain from corns and calluses can be managed successfully with padding and by having a doctor trim them. Over time, however, the condition worsens. Wearing tight or high-heel shoes that jam the toes often aggravates the condition. In advanced stages, hammertoes can become rigid or the joint may become painfully dislocated. Hammertoes do not improve without medical intervention.

According to Michael Cosenza, DPM, AACFAS of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons, there are several ways to treat hammertoes depending on their severity. "Hammertoes are a progressive deformity and the earlier they are treated, the better. In early stages we can trim corns and calluses or pad them," he said. "Using custom orthotic devices, taking ibuprofen or other



nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications, and switching to wider shoes that allow the toes to move freely can help relieve the pain."

Cosenza cautions that corns and calluses should not be trimmed at home. To avoid risk of cuts and infection, a foot and ankle surgeon should trim them properly as needed to relieve pain. He also advised patients to avoid medicated foot pads that may contain small amounts of acid that can irritate the toes.

When hammertoes become rigid, surgical intervention usually offers the best long-term benefit. The foot and ankle surgeon will consider various options and choose one that best fits your needs, based on age, activity level and severity of the hammertoe deformity.

As people age, it's important that they stay active to keep their bodies healthy. Seniors should not allow painful hammertoes to keep them off their feet.

For further information about hammertoes and how they are treated, and to locate a foot and ankle surgeon in your area, visit [www.FootPhysicians.com](http://www.FootPhysicians.com).