



Here at Simply Feet - we like to look at everything in a simple way!

The Traffic Light symbol above indicates the way you should approach this condition. **Amber means that you can begin treating this condition yourself. However, you should seek professional help if you want reassurance that what you are doing is correct or if the condition fails to improve within a short time.**

So, let's approach your problem in a methodical and logical manner, so that you can gain some knowledge about your condition. After reading a little about it, you can decide on the best course of action.

Remember this advice is for **guidance only** and if you are in any doubt at all, please consult your HPC Registered Podiatrist, Physiotherapist or your GP.

Hammer Toes

What are they?

A misshapen toe that bends downwards— usually any one, or all of, the lesser toes from the 2nd through to the 5th. When this happens to the first toe it is called a 'trigger toe' or 'trigger hallux'.

Some Common Causes

- Shoes that do not fit properly. Sometimes you concentrate on making sure the big toe fits, when the 2nd toe is actually longer, and as a result has to bend to fit in the shoe. Pointed shoes make the situation even worse.
- High heels on top of everything else mentioned above just make the situation the worst possible and will result in these sorts of problem toes developing.
- You can develop this condition due to hereditary factors.
- The condition can be a result of muscle imbalance in the toes combined with pressure and stress over a prolonged period of time.
- A very long 2nd toe can be a cause of this particular toe being misshapen.
- High arched feet where the tendon on the top of the foot pulls back on the toes.
- A stiff tendon that stops a toe from resting flat on the floor and pulls it up instead.
- A "flat foot" can also be a cause of this problem.
- If you have a bunion then the way the big toe moves across the foot can cause the other lesser toes to "buckle" and become misshapen.
- This condition can be caused by trauma to any one, or all of, the toes.

The Main Symptoms are:

- Painful cramped toes. The pain made worse when you walk and a badly fitting shoe irritates the area.
- Cramp in the toes, foot and legs due to the abnormal function of tendons in the foot.
- Corns can form on areas that have very high levels of pressure.
- Long standing corns with scar tissue within them can become badly infected.
- On occasions a fully retracted toe is very difficult to straighten.

Some suggested treatment programs:

- Corrective Devices (Orthotics) – these will help realign your feet where the cause is "flat feet", and allow the forces that are causing the problem to be directed to where they should be, and not where they are making the situation worse.
- Use non-corrective devices such as gel insoles and other cushioning devices to help ease the pressure. Gel toe props are particularly useful.
- Obviously have a critical look at your footwear – make sure that your shoes fit properly – that they have enough room in the front of the shoe (the toe box) and if you do have this condition already then this point is even more important as any irritation is going to make your situation much worse.
- Make sure you also pay attention to your socks, tights and hosiery making sure that these items are not too tight either.
- Use a good quality foot cream to help keep your skin supple and soft.
- If the causes were to do with the actual bone structure, for example, if one of your toes were abnormally long, then maybe surgery would help.