



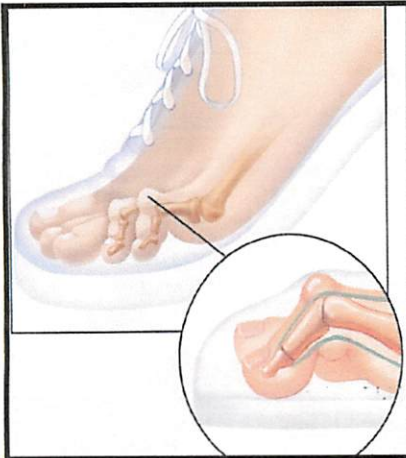
Everett Foot Clinic

# Hammer Toes

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## What Are Hammer Toes?

In general, the term “hammer toe” describes a buckling of any of the toe joints, Joints at the end or middle of the toe, as well as the joint near the ball of the foot, may be affected. Toe joints usually curl because of a muscle imbalance or tight tendons.



## Physical Exam

Your doctor will examine all your toes, testing whether or not buckled joints can be moved. Your feet will also be checked for any skin changes. **Corns** (a buildup of dead skin cells) often form between curled toes or on top of buckled joints where shoes rub. If irritated, corns may turn into open wounds and become infected.

## Testing

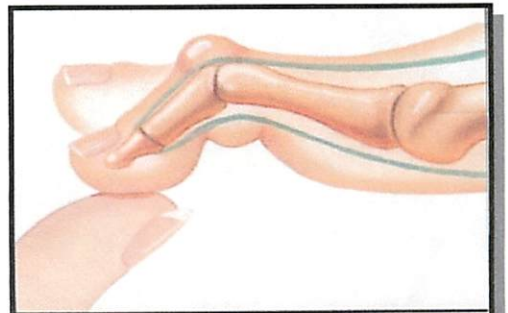
X-rays may be taken of a curled toe to show the amount of deformity. An x-ray may also show whether or not the joint is affected by arthritis.

## Types of Hammer Toes

Hammer toes may be flexible or rigid, depending on the joint’s ability to move. A flexible joint may become more rigid as you age.

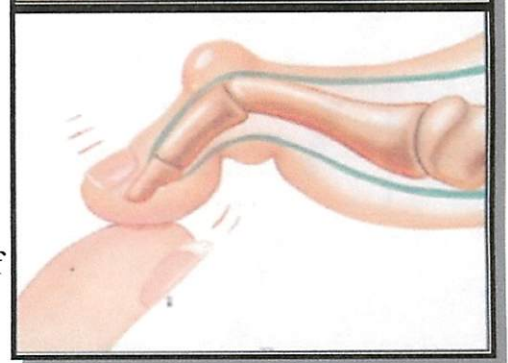
## Flexible Joint

You can straighten a flexible hammer toe with your fingers. Although they look painful, flexible hammer toes may hurt.



## A Rigid Joint

A rigid hammer toe cannot be moved, even with the fingers. Rigid joints may cause pain and distort foot movement. This may put extra stress on the ball of the foot, causing a callus (a corn on the bottom of the foot).



## Treating Hammer Toes

If your symptoms are mild, changing shoes may be all the treatment you need. Using a splint or pad to hold your toes straight also may help. Or try cushioning corns and calluses with felt padding. If your symptoms are severe, surgery may be needed. The type of procedure often depends on whether your toe joints are flexible or rigid.

DMC 2003