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Jeżeli chcemy, aby te informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić 01932 723553

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Lesser toes deformities

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Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net. If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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Useful Links

British Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society (BOFAS)

<https://www.bofas.org.uk>

Offers a list of all surgeons carrying out specialist foot and ankle surgery across the UK as well as patient information.

Arthritis Research UK / Versus Arthritis

<https://www.versusarthritis.org/>

Phone: 0300 790 0400

Offers a wide range of information and articles as well as a selection of self-help booklets which can be downloaded on the Internet.

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS)

<https://www.nras.org.uk>

Phone: 0845 458 3969

Helpline: 0800 298 7650

Email: enquires@nras.org.uk

Provides information and support for people with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), their families, friends, and carers.

What are lesser toe deformities?

The toes which are not your big toes are known as the lesser toes. They become deformed when more pressure is exerted on them than their joints can resist. When the muscles that control the toes become unbalanced, so that one set pulls harder than others, this causes the toes to bend further. In some people the tissues in the lower part of the joint at the base of the toe (metatarso-phalangeal joint) becomes weak, allowing the base of the toe to drift upwards which further unbalances it. The deformity that results, depends upon which joints are affected and the toe may either be called a:

- Hammer toe.
- Claw toe.
- Mallet toe.

What problems do lesser toe deformities cause?

The main problem is that they tend to rub on shoes, either on top of the toe or at the tip, or both. This rubbing may simply be uncomfortable, or the skin may be rubbed raw. If the MTP joint is bent upwards, particularly if it is stiff, the toe may press down and cause pain in the ball of the foot. This is known as metatarsalgia which was previously discussed overleaf. Bent toes may also rub on one another or on the big toe, especially if the big toe is bent towards the second toe (hallux valgus or bunion).

What can I do about the lesser toe deformities?

The simplest thing to do is buy shoes which have enough room in the toe area for your toes to fit comfortably. High heels should be avoided since they tend to force the toes down into the tip of the shoe. Small pads on the top or end of the toe may improve the discomfort. If your toes are interfering with your daily activities and the problem is not helped by the simple measures outlined above, it may be best to have an operation to straighten the toes. Your GP can refer you to an orthopaedic foot and ankle surgeon who will listen to your problems and examine you.

Depending on the shape of your toes and how stiff they are, they will advise you on the best method for straightening your toes which may include:

- Freeing up the joints.
- Transferring one of the tendons which curl your toes to the top of the toe.
- Removing bone from one or more joints and then possibly fusing the joint straight.

Is surgery for lesser toe deformities successful?

Over 90% of toe operations correct the problem for which they were done. However, a number of problems can occur:

- Recurrence of the deformity.
- The toe may be swollen for several months, or in a few cases permanently.
- Stretching of the nerve in the toe can cause tingling, numbness, or over-sensitivity in the toe - this usually gets better after a few weeks but can be permanent.
- Injury to the blood supply of the toe. If one of the arteries supplying the toe gets injured during surgery, then you might experience pain when the weather is very cold. If both arteries get injured, then the toe might not any more be viable, in which case you might end up with an amputation (extremely unlikely scenario).
- Scar sensitivity.
- Non-union (when your surgeon has performed a fusion of a painful/deformed joint, but the bones are not healing).
- Residual pain or deterioration of symptoms.