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Claw foot

Claw foot is a deformity of the foot. The joint of the toe that is closest to the ankle is bent upward, and the other joints are bent downward. The toe looks like a claw.

Considerations

Claw toes may be present at birth (congenital). The condition can also develop later in life because of other disorders (acquired). Claw toes may be caused by a nerve problem in the legs or a spinal cord problem or signs of arthritis. The cause is unknown in many cases.

Most of the time, claw toes are not harmful by themselves. Rarely, they may be the first sign of a more serious disease of the nervous system.

Claw toes may cause pain and lead to calluses on the top of the toe over the first joint, but may also be painless. The condition may create problems fitting into shoes.

Causes

Causes may include:

- Ankle fractures or surgery
- Cerebral palsy
- Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease
- Other brain and nervous system disorders
- Rheumatoid arthritis

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your health care provider if you think you may be getting claw toes.

What to Expect at Your Office Visit

The provider will do an exam to check for muscle, nerve, and spine problems. The physical exam will most likely include extra attention to the feet and hands. The provider will examine the flexibility of your toes and ankle.

You will be asked questions about your condition, such as:

- When did you first notice this?
- Did you have a previous injury?
- Is it getting worse?
- Does it affect both feet?
- Do you have other symptoms at the same time?
- Do you have any abnormal feelings or loss of feeling in your toes or feet?
- Do any other family members have the same condition?

The abnormal shape of the toe can increase pressure and cause calluses or ulcers on your toes. Fabric pads or sleeves that cover the top of your toes may help. You may need to wear special shoes to ease pressure. Claw toes can also be treated surgically.

Alternative Names

Claw toes

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Review Date 4/24/2023

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Health Content
Provider
06/01/2028

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