

# Insights on Family Connections to Hammertoe

## 1. What Is Hammertoe?

Hammertoe is a condition where one or more of your toes (usually the second, third, or fourth) become bent at the middle joint. Instead of lying flat, the affected toe points downward, creating a hammer-like shape. Over time, this misalignment can become stiff or rigid, leading to pain, difficulty walking, corns, calluses, and trouble fitting into shoes.



## 2. Is Hammertoe Caused by Genetics?

Genetics can set the stage for hammertoe, especially if certain structural traits run in your family. If your parents or grandparents have hammertoe, bunions, or flat feet, you may be more likely to develop foot conditions, including hammertoe, over time.

## 3. Lifestyle Matters Too

Even if hammertoe runs in your family, you are not guaranteed to get it. Your daily habits, especially the shoes you wear and how much pressure you put on your feet, can prevent or accelerate the problem. One of the biggest culprits? Tight, narrow shoes, particularly those with pointed toes or high heels.



## 4. Who's Most at Risk for Hammertoe?

While heredity is a significant factor, you're more likely to develop hammertoe if you: are female, as women tend to wear tight, high-heeled shoes more frequently, have diabetes or arthritis, which can affect nerves and joints in the feet, and have poor circulation, leading to muscle weakness or atrophy.

## 5. Signs You May Be Developing Hammertoe

Early detection is key. The earlier you catch hammertoe, the more likely you can manage it non-surgically. Keep an eye out for: toes that are beginning to curl downward, discomfort when wearing shoes, especially in the toe box, corns or calluses forming on the tops or tips of toes, and redness or swelling around the toe joints.

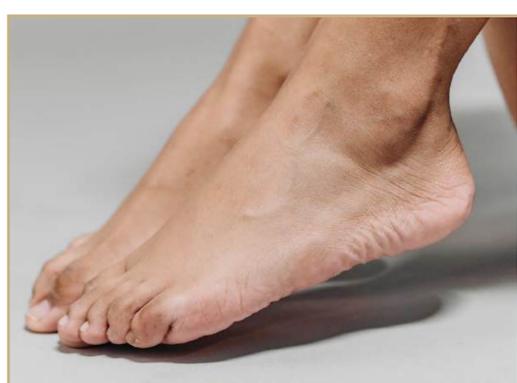


## 6. How to Lower Your Risk of Hammertoe (Even If It Runs in the Family)

You may not be able to control your genetics, but you can try to outsmart them by taking control of your habits. Here's how to lower your risk of developing or worsening hammertoe: choose shoes with a roomy toe box and good arch support. Your toes should lie flat without being crowded. Avoid high heels for everyday wear. If you must wear them, limit the height and duration.

## 7. When Should You See a Podiatrist?

If your toe starts to bend noticeably, becomes painful, or limits your ability to walk comfortably, seek help. A flexible hammertoe can progress if left untreated. A podiatrist can evaluate the condition, assess your risk factors, and recommend a custom treatment plan that may include physical therapy, orthotics, or surgical correction, if necessary.



## 8. The Sole Truth

So, is hammertoe hereditary? Yes, but that's only part of the equation. Your genes may give you certain foot characteristics, but your footwear choices, lifestyle habits, and willingness to intervene early decide whether your toes stay in line or go rogue.