

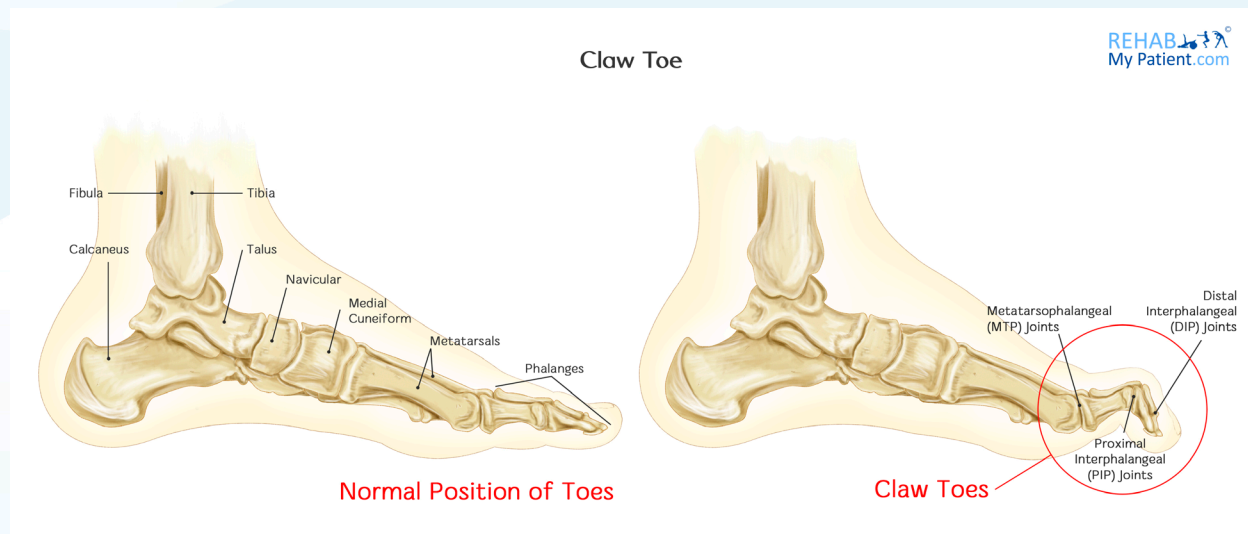
Claw Toe

Many people end up blaming the claw toe foot deformity on wearing shoes that squeeze the toes, such as high heels or shoes that are too short. Claw toe also results from nerve damage attributed to alcoholism or diabetes, which weakens the muscles in the foot. When you have claw toe, it means your toes form a claw by digging into your shoes' soles and causing painful calluses to occur. If treatment is not provided, the condition will worsen and become a permanent deformity.

Claw Toe Anatomy

Claw toe deformities are those that are often the direct result of wearing compressive footwear. Instances occur where the condition is congenital, but other reasons exist that can worsen the problem. All of the toes except the big toe have three bones. The deformities are due to an abnormal position of the bones along the joints between all of the bones.

Claw toes appear like their name would describe, like a clenched fist. Even though most of the other toe deformities result from footwear, claw toes occur most often from a muscle imbalance. The imbalance could be the direct result of neuromuscular disorders, rheumatoid arthritis, a stroke or any number of other conditions.



How to Treat Claw Toes:

1. DIP Joint Arthroplasty

For this deformity, an arthroplasty of the DIP joint could be required. A small incision on the top of the toe above the joint is used to enter the affected area. Once the joint is entered, one side of the joint is removed. This helps to release the tension on the ligaments and the tendons surrounding the joint, while letting the toe be realigned into its rightful position. Once the toe is in position, stitches hold the toe in place during the healing process.

2. MTP Joint Release

In instances where clawing is a problem, the MTP joint might need to be released to allow the phalanx to return to normal position. An incision is made on top of the affected toe atop the MTP joint. The tight tendons and ligaments are released until the toe can easily move to its correct position. A metal pin is inserted under the soft tissues to keep the toe aligned until it has time to heal. After three or four weeks, the pin is removed.

3. Rehabilitation

Individuals can benefit from 1-2 courses of treatment with a physical or manual therapist. Strengthening and stretching exercises can help improve muscle balance.

4. Orthotics and Shoe Adaptions

Some therapists will be able to design a pair of insoles that will help correct the problem. You could consult a podiatrist, chiropodist, or physical therapist. The therapist can also recommend shoes that provide you with extra depth in the forefront. Thanks to the added depth, the bony areas of your foot won't rub against the inside of your shoes. Small cushions are applied over the irritated toes.

Tips:

- Avoid wearing shoes that are too short.
- Make sure the shoes you purchase can accommodate the length of all your toes, so that way there is no irritation.
- Claw toe is more common in those who have high arches.
- Avoid wearing shoes that are pointed and have a high heel to prevent pushing the foot downward into a wall where the toes are squished.
- Seek expert advice to correct or manage the condition.