

Hammer Toe

Explanation of Diagnosis

Hammer toe is a **toe deformity** where the middle joint of the toe becomes **bent downward**, resembling a hammer. It is caused by **muscle imbalances, tight footwear, high arches, or arthritis**, leading to **pain, stiffness, corns, calluses, and difficulty walking**. If untreated, the toe may become rigid, requiring surgical correction.

Specific Work Modifications

- **Avoid prolonged standing or walking on hard surfaces.**
- **Wear wide, soft-toed shoes** to prevent pressure on the affected toe.
- **Use orthotic inserts or toe cushions** to relieve discomfort.
- **Take sitting breaks** if the job requires extended standing.
- **Avoid tight or high-heeled footwear**, which can worsen the deformity.

Specific Activity Modifications

- **Avoid high-impact activities** such as running, jumping, or dancing in tight shoes.
- **Modify workouts** by switching to **low-impact exercises** such as cycling, swimming, or elliptical training.
- **Use proper footwear** with arch support if engaging in sports.
- **Stretch and strengthen the toes daily** to prevent worsening deformity.

Recommended Supplements

- **Collagen peptides (10 g daily)** - Supports ligament and tendon health.
- **Vitamin D3 (1000-2000 IU daily)** - Aids in bone and joint health.
- **Calcium (1000-1200 mg daily)** - Strengthens bones and reduces foot stress.
- **Magnesium (300-400 mg daily)** - Helps with muscle relaxation and foot cramps.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids (1000 mg daily)** - Reduces joint inflammation.

Recommended Nutrition and Hydration

Diet Recommendations:

- **Bone and joint-supporting foods:** Dairy products, leafy greens, almonds, and fortified cereals.
- **Anti-inflammatory foods:** Fatty fish (salmon, sardines), turmeric, berries, and walnuts.
- **Protein-rich foods:** Chicken, eggs, lentils, and dairy to support muscle and tendon health.

- **Limit processed foods, sugar, and alcohol**, which can worsen inflammation.

Hydration Tips:

- **Drink at least 2-3 liters of water daily** to maintain muscle flexibility.
- **Limit caffeine and alcohol**, which can dehydrate tissues and slow healing.

Home Exercise Prescription

Perform **2-3 times daily** to improve toe flexibility, reduce pain, and strengthen foot muscles:

Stretching & Mobility

1. Toe Stretch

- Sit down and gently pull the affected toe **backward to straighten it**.
- **Hold for 20-30 seconds, repeat 3 times per foot.**

2. Toe Towel Scrunches

- Place a towel on the floor and use your toes to **scrunch it toward you**.
- **10 reps, 2 times daily.**

3. Toe Extension Stretch

- Use your fingers to gently **pull the toe upward** to stretch the tendons.
- **Hold for 20-30 seconds, repeat 3 times per foot.**

Strengthening & Stability

4. Toe Taps

- Tap the affected toe up and down while keeping the others still.
- **10 reps, 2-3 times daily.**

5. Marble Pickup Exercise

- Place **small objects (like marbles or cotton balls)** on the floor and pick them up with your toes.
- **10 reps per foot, 2 times daily.**

6. Rolling Massage with a Ball

- Use a **tennis ball or frozen water bottle** under the foot and roll it gently.
- **1-2 minutes per foot, 1-2 times daily.**

Avoid high heels, tight shoes, and prolonged standing until symptoms improve.

Helpful Books

1. "Every Woman's Guide to Foot Pain Relief: The New Science of Healthy Feet" - Katy Bowman

2. *"Fixing Your Feet: Injury Prevention and Treatment for Athletes"* - John Vonhof

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Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.