



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
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Footprints

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Bunionettes: Sure, They Sound Cute, but They Can Be Painful!

About the Doctors



Drs. Nitza N. Rodriguez and Robert J. Spencer are experienced, highly-trained, compassionate foot & ankle specialists who treat all conditions of the foot and ankle in infants, children and adults. Dr. Spencer has a special interest in trauma, sports related injuries, and reconstruction of the foot and ankle. Dr. Rodriguez is fluent in English and Spanish and has additional training and experience in lower extremity pediatric deformities including clubfoot. Learn more about the doctors at www.socalfootandankle.com.



Bunionettes might sound like a cute group of back-up singers or animated friends, but don't let the name fool you! These close relatives of the bunion can pack a powerful and painful punch. They form on the outside of your foot at the base of the pinkie toe due to friction and pressure. The bothersome bony protrusions yield similar symptoms as those stemming from the more well-known big toe bunion.

Redness, swelling, tenderness, and pain can accompany the problem, and it can be easily aggravated and worsened by shoes that rub and irritate the area. Calluses often develop and the condition can become as unsightly as it is uncomfortable. Ignored, bunionettes can make even walking unbearable. Luckily there are ways to ease the discomfort and slow the progression. Anti-inflammatory medication and ice can minimize pain in the affected joint. Wearing comfy shoes that fit properly will eliminate stress placed upon the area as well. There are special pads you can put over the bump for added cushion and protection, and splints or spacers keep the toes in correct alignment and the joint from jutting outward.

Look for footwear that offers plenty of wiggle room for your toes, and avoid narrow, pointy, high heels as much as possible.

There's nothing cute about bunionette pain—keep discomfort to a minimum with these and other tips found on our webpage. With our help, you can bid goodbye to these baby toe bumps with their adult-sized symptoms, and get back to your pain-free days.



Okay, you've hit the snooze three times now and you've got to get up, but when your feet hit the floor—Yow! Suddenly you're seeing stars even though the sun is out. Heel pain in the morning is a sure sign of plantar fasciitis, an overuse injury to the ligament that spans the bottom of your foot from your toes to your heel. Repetitive stress causes small tears in this band of tissues which leads to pain and inflammation.

At rest, the injured ligament tightens, so after sitting for a long period of time, or sleeping all night long for instance, that first step is a doozy! The tight tissues pull on the heel bone causing a sharp, stabbing pain. So what can you do about it besides never getting out of bed? Well, this is your wakeup call—when the alarm goes off, that's your cue to start stretching. Bend forward and grab your toes then gently pull them toward you. Use a pillow case to wrap around the arch of your foot, pulling the ends until you feel a stretch. Massaging the arch can help too.

Once you're able to hop out of bed without hurting, try calf stretches against the wall, or stand on a step with your heels hanging over the edge, then press them down. You can even freeze a water bottle and roll your foot over it for a bonus massage while you ice.

Of course, the best course of action is rest. Allow your foot the time it needs to heal, and the next time your alarm goes off, you'll be having a good morning, instead of a painful one.

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Hammering Out Solutions for Hammertoes

Hammertoes happen for a couple of reasons—you may just be born with the condition, or you may just opt for shoes that are too small! Think about it: If your toes are squished into short or narrow footwear, they are forced into a bent position, and the muscles and tendons tighten up. After a while, this makes it difficult for them to straighten back out. Typically this affects the second toe, but can happen to others as well.

The good news is that if you treat your hammertoe in its early stages, the condition may not result in pain. However, wait too long and you could very well be looking at surgical correction. So if your toe is bent at the middle joint forcing the tip to face downward, try these treatment methods pronto:

First of all, go shoe shopping! Wearing properly fitted shoes is key. Make sure the toe box is wide enough and deep enough for your toes to lie flat with plenty of room to wiggle. Avoid high heels, too, as they tend to force your feet into an abnormal position. Stretching exercises will strengthen muscles and keep them flexible. Here's an easy one: try picking up a towel off the floor with just your toes. You'll help tend off a hammertoe and clean up at the same time!

In addition, there are products available that can help, including compression socks, slings, pads, and splints all made specifically to keep toes straight.

For more treatment solutions to put the hammer down on hammertoes, just ask our helpful staff for some straight answers.

Try the Hot Yoga Trend!

You've probably heard about the latest fitness craze hitting the nation—let's face it, hot yoga is a hot topic! How does it differ from other forms of this popular posing and stretching exercise? Well first of all it's performed in a hot and steamy studio—we're talking 105 degrees, with 40% humidity! Now you might wonder why in the world you would want to exercise in such severe conditions, but the fact of the matter is, the heat contributes to raising your heart rate and exhausting your muscles. In other words, it intensifies the workout! In fact, you can achieve the same amount of cardio holding a pose on a mat as you could running a mile.

Also known as Bikram yoga, a typical program covers 26 poses in 90 minutes. This vigorous series of intense postures is designed to engage all major muscle groups, increasing flexibility and strength. The hot and humid air forces you to breathe deeply—a key component to yoga of any kind. It also makes you sweat, detoxifying your entire body. Best of all, it's an awesome alternative therapy to heal injuries and prevent them in the future.

There are hot yoga studios popping up everywhere, so if health issues are not a concern, go ahead and give it a try. Of course you should always check with experts like us before you launch into a new routine. You should also drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, and stop if you feel at all dizzy or sick.

Remember hot yoga is super cool, but it's not for everyone!





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Little Footprints

Is There Really Such a Thing as Growing Pains?

School sports will be in full swing soon and young athletes everywhere will be hitting the courts, fields, pitches, and courses. If your active child is complaining of heel pain, however, he or she may feel like hitting the showers instead. One of the most common reasons for a child to be sidelined with heel pain is a condition called Sever's disease—most prominent in active kids who just happen to be going through a growth spurt.

Yes, growing pains are for real!

In this case, the heel bone grows faster than its surrounding muscles and tendons, causing them to be pulled tight, and placing excessive stress on the heel's growth plate. A tight Achilles tendon can especially aggravate the problem and cause the tenderness, swelling, and pain of Sever's disease. Most often this occurs in growing girls between the ages of 8 and 13 and boys between 10 and 15. Physical activities played on hard surfaces and which involve lots of running and jumping add to the stress of the situation, increasing symptoms, including pain on either side and the back of the heel, stiffness, inflammation, and difficulty walking—much less running and jumping!



The problem eventually goes away once your child is done growing and the growth plate hardens into mature bone. While this process can definitely take some time, there are things you can do to help ease discomfort along the way. First and foremost, make sure your child's shoes fit and are appropriate for the sport in which he or she is participating. Replacing high-impact activities with low impact ones—like swimming and biking—will help recovery without having to slow your child down! Elevating the feet, icing the area, and taking recommended anti-inflammatory medication can all go a long way toward reducing pain. Heel pads and orthotic shoe inserts can be a big help as well.

Find out more about Sever's disease and how we can help keep your child's feet happy and healthy as they grow. Just ask our expert staff.