



## Corns and Calluses

A corn or callus is an area of hard thickened skin on the foot that is formed in response to pressure or friction. They are part of the body's defense system to protect the underlying tissues. If the cause of pressure is not relieved, calluses can become painful. If pressure becomes concentrated in a small area, a 'hard' corn may develop which has a central core.

Common sites of corn and callus formation are the ball of the foot, under the big toe, the tips and the tops of toes. 'Soft' corns may develop between the toes where the skin is moist from sweat or inadequate drying. Sometimes the pressure of the corn or callus may produce inflammation which can result in acute pain, swelling and redness.

Corns and calluses may be a sign that you have an underlying foot disorder such as a joint that is out of alignment. Therefore, it is important to seek professional advice rather than attempt to treat calluses or corns yourself.



### Symptoms

The symptoms of corns and calluses can include:

- Thickened patch of hard skin on the foot.
- Hard small bump of skin that may have a central core.
- White and rubbery bumps of skin ('soft' corns in between the toes).
- Pain when pressure or friction is applied to the area.

### Some people are at higher risk

Anyone can develop corns or calluses, but some groups are particularly at risk, including:

- Elderly individuals
- Individuals who spend a lot of time on their feet
- Individuals with flat feet
- Individuals with foot deformities, such as hammertoe, bunions or arthritis
- Individuals who regularly wear shoes that are narrow, tight, ill-fitting, or high-heeled.

### Do not try to treat corns and calluses yourself

Over-the-counter treatments such as corn plasters do not treat the underlying foot disorder. The body protects skin tissues from pressure or friction damage by producing an area of hard skin so, unless the cause of the pressure or friction is found and removed, calluses and corns will continue to form. These over-the-counter treatments can also damage the healthy surrounding skin if used incorrectly. Do not ever attempt to cut away or scrape a callus. If you accidentally cut yourself, the humid environment of socks and shoes makes infection of the wound more likely.

### Seek advice from our podiatrists

If you have corns or calluses or think you may be developing them, call our office for an evaluation and treatment.

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Options may include:

- Investigation and treatment of the possible causes, e.g. a bunion or hammertoe deformity.
- Professional reduction of the callus or corn to relieve pain.
- Shields or padding on various areas of the foot to temporarily redistribute pressure. For example, you may need to wear little foam wedges between your toes.
- If needed, permanent inserts to wear inside your shoes (orthotics) to offer long term pressure relief.

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