

**NorthPointe Foot & Ankle**  
27901 Woodward Ave.  
Suite 110  
Berkley, MI 48072  
(248) 545-0100  
**MichiganFootCare.com**

Jeffrey Frederick, DPM  
Lee Hoffman, DPM  
Charles G. Kissel, DPM  
Michael Schey, DPM  
David Ungar, DPM  
Marc Weitzman, DPM

## Meet Our Team!

### Craig Alexander

Craig Alexander is one of NorthPointe Foot & Ankle's Medical Assistants (MA). He has been with the practice for over three years.

As an MA, Craig will be the first person to meet a patient in the exam room. He will make sure all records are up to date and discuss the issues surrounding the current visit. He will make sure the patient is prepped for the doctor's exam. Once examined by the doctor, Craig will adhere to the doctor's direction for follow-up and make sure the patient knows the course of



action to take. Craig is a former Navy Corpsman and a full-time

student. He is looking to advance his medical career. In his spare time, he enjoys the outdoors.

Make sure to say hello the next time you are at the office.

# NorthPointe News

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## HAMMERTOES

A hammertoe is a contracture (bending) of one or both joints of the second, third, fourth, or fifth (little) toes. This abnormal bending can put pressure on the toe when wearing shoes, causing problems to develop.

In the earlier stages, hammertoes are flexible and the symptoms can often be managed with non-invasive measures. But if left untreated, hammertoes can become more rigid and will not respond to non-surgical treatment.

Because of the progressive nature of hammertoes, they should receive early attention. Hammertoes never get better without intervention.

The most common **cause** of a hammertoe is a muscle/tendon imbalance. This imbalance, which leads to a bending of the toe, results from mechanical (structural) changes in the foot that occur over time in some people.

Hammertoes may be aggravated by shoes that don't fit properly. A hammertoe may result if a toe is too long and is forced into a cramped position when a tight shoe is worn.

Occasionally, a hammertoe is the result of an earlier trauma to the toe. In some people, hammertoes are inherited.

Common **symptoms** of hammertoes include:

- Pain or irritation of the affected toe when wearing shoes.
- Corns and calluses on the toe, between two toes, or on the ball of the foot.
- Inflammation, redness, or a burning sensation
- Contracture of the toe
- In more severe cases of hammertoe, open sores may form.

Hammertoes are progressive – they don't go away by themselves and usually they will get worse over time. However, not all cases are alike – some hammertoes progress more rapidly than others. Once your foot and ankle surgeon has

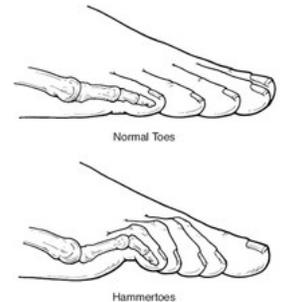
evaluated your hammertoes, a treatment plan can be developed that is suited to your needs.

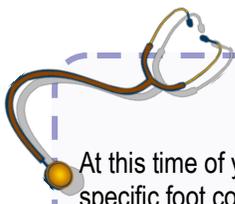
**A number of non-surgical** measures can be undertaken:

- **Padding corns and calluses.** Your foot and ankle surgeon can provide or prescribe pads designed to shield corns from irritation. If you want to try over-the-counter pads, avoid the medicated types. Medicated pads are generally not recommended because they may contain a small amount of acid that can be harmful. Consult your surgeon about this option.
- **Changes in footwear.** Avoid shoes with pointed toes, shoes that are too short, or shoes with high heels – conditions that can force your toe against the front of the shoe. Instead, choose comfortable shoes with a deep, roomy toe box and heels no higher than two inches.
- **Orthotic devices.** A custom orthotic device placed in your shoe may help control the muscle/tendon imbalance.
- **Injection therapy.** Corticosteroid injections are sometimes used to ease pain and inflammation caused by hammertoes.
- **Medications.** Oral nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, may be recommended to reduce pain and inflammation.
- **Splinting/strapping.** Splints or small strapings may be applied by the surgeon to realign the bent toe.

**In some cases, surgery** is needed.

Often patients with hammertoes have bunions or other foot deformities corrected at the same time. In selecting the procedure or combination of procedures for your particular case, the foot and ankle surgeon will take into consideration the extent of your deformity, the number of toes involved, your age, your activity level, and other factors.





# What is a Heel Fissure?

At this time of year, cold weather brings with it specific foot concerns. Dry, cracked skin on the heels of the feet can develop into painful fissures if not treated properly. These cracks on the heels can arise anywhere in the body, but most commonly occur on the rim of the heel and web spaces. Dry skin, or xerosis, in combination with callused skin around the heels can lead to fissuring.



To avoid painful cracks this winter, be sure to apply a lotion to the heels multiple times per day, and always wear socks with supportive shoe gear. If you are up for home remedies and the cracks are not deep or open, try applying this paste daily to your feet: mix in a blender 1/2 avocado, 1/2 banana and 1/2 coconut – these ingredients are rich in several essential oils and fat soluble vitamins to keep your skin soft and moisturized. If you would rather try something more conventional, pick up a jar of a moisturizer cream like Eucerin, shea butter or petroleum jelly instead. There are professional grade moisturizers available in our office as well as prescription medication that may be used for heel fissures.

Heel fissures are actually cut wounds that extend through the epidermis and into the dermis. When the fissures reach the lower layers of skin, bleeding can occur which means so can an infection. Special consideration must be taken with patients who also suffer from Athletes foot (Tinea Pedis), Psoriasis, Thyroid disease, Eczema, or Diabetes. The good news is this painful problem is easily avoidable with proper foot care.

If creams alone are not enough to heal those cracks, try wrapping the feet in saran wrap after applying the cream, then put your socks on to hold in the extra moisture overnight. Just be sure to do this only before bed, as it will be slippery to walk around! Heel fissures can be a recurrent problem, and often affect both feet, making this painful condition even more important to deal with right away.

Excessive pressure or weight on the fat pad of the heel causes it to expand sideways, making this area especially susceptible. Excessive exposure of the feet to water can deplete the skin of its natural oils. Also, as we age, the skin decreases its production of sebum (the beneficial oils normally released by the skin). This, along with the loss of the skin's ability to stretch, means elderly people are more likely to suffer from dry, cracked heels.

Your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle podiatrist can help you determine the correct action to take for recurring problems.

## Boot Buying

Now that the winter months are here, it is time to check last years boots for proper fit and see what condition they are in. Chances are - it is time for a new pair. When shopping for any footwear, keep in mind protection, support, comfort and stylishness. The doctors at NorthPointe Foot & Ankle have this boot selection advice to share:

1. Be sure your boots are insulated and waterproof. Even if the boot maker says the boots are waterproof, still treat it with a waterproofing product. The body has to work harder to compensate for moisture, so you want to minimize as much moisture to your foot as possible.
2. Select natural materials like leather that allow proper airflow and help to keep feet dry.
3. Although rubber boots will keep you dry, rubber does not breathe. Make sure that any rubber boots purchased are fully lined to help absorb foot moisture.
4. Boots with rigid shaped soles limit natural foot movement and provide little, if any, arch support. Add cushioned insoles and arch supports.
5. The best traction is received from boots with a rubber sole and deep grooves.
6. Styles with narrow toes and high heels often cause pain and numbness. Select a lower heel or stacked style for additional support. Choose a style with plenty of toe room, a firm heel counter and traction to ensure stability.
7. To provide warmth, ski sock liners are a way to keep feet warmer without adding bulk. They are available at sporting good stores and are worn under regular socks.
8. Above all – listen to your feet. If they are not comfortable, the footwear selected is not the best choice.

## Warm up Your Neighbors!

NorthPointe Foot & Ankle is once again joining the Berkley Senior Center and the Berkley Youth Assistance Club to collect new gloves, hats, scarves and socks for all ages. The gifts will be distributed to those less fortunate in the community before Christmas –including students in the Berkley School District.

**COLLECTION: OF NEW ITEMS**  
**November 25 - December 13**  
**Hats, Gloves,**  
**Scarves, Socks**

Monetary donations will also be accepted to purchase items.



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**

The doctors and staff of Northpointe Foot & Ankle wish you and your family a safe and healthy holiday season.



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