

NorthPointe Foot & Ankle  
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## MEET OUR TEAM

### Darcy Elwart

Some of you may only know Darcy by her friendly voice on the telephone helping you with financial and insurance matters. In fact she does a lot more at our office to keep things running smoothly and ensuring your needs are met.

Darcy is Office Manager of NorthPointe Foot & Ankle. She has been with the practice since its beginning and has been assisting Dr. Hoffman for almost 30 years.

The American Society of Podiatric Medical Assistants has awarded Darcy clinical certification. She is also a member of the organization.



We are proud to have Darcy on our team. Her dedication and compassion towards our patients is appreciated!

# NorthPointe News



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## Hammertoe

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.

Hammertoes usually start out as mild deformities and get progressively worse over time. In the earlier stages, hammertoes are flexible and the symptoms can often be managed with noninvasive 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 some kind of intervention.

### Symptoms

Common symptoms of hammertoes include:

- Pain or irritation of the affected toe when wearing shoes.
- Corns and calluses (a buildup of skin) on the toe, between two toes, or on the ball of the foot. Corns are caused by constant friction against the shoe. They may be soft or hard, depending upon their location.
- 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 NorthPointe Foot & Ankle surgeon has evaluated your hammertoes, a treatment plan can be developed that is suited to your needs.

### Non-surgical Treatment

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 hammertoe.

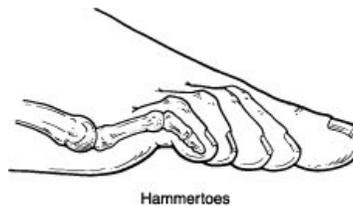
- **Medications.** Oral nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, may be recommended to reduce pain and inflammation.

- **Splinting/strapping.** Splints or small straps may be applied by the surgeon to realign the bent toe.

### When Is Surgery Needed?

In some cases, usually when the hammertoe has become more rigid and painful, or when an open sore has developed, 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, your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle surgeon will take into consideration the extent of your deformity, the number of toes involved, your age, your activity level, and other factors. The length of the recovery period will vary, depending on the procedure or procedures performed.



Hammertoes

To receive our monthly newsletter, send your email address to:  
[Doctors@NorthPointeFoot.com](mailto:Doctors@NorthPointeFoot.com)



# What is a Heel Fissure?

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.



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, Psoriasis, Thyroid disease, Eczema, or Diabetes. The good news is this painful problem is easily avoidable with proper foot care.

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.

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 ½ avocado, ½ banana and ½ 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.

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. Walking while feet are wrapped is not advised as it may be slippery. 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.

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

## Diabetes Alert Day

American Diabetes Association Alert Day is a one day "wake-up call" asking the American public to take the Diabetes Risk Test to find out if they are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. This year, Alert Day will be held on Tuesday, March 24.

The Diabetes Risk Test asks users to answer simple questions about weight, age, family history and other potential risk factors for pre-diabetes or Type 2 diabetes. You can be part of the movement to Stop Diabetes and get your free Diabetes Risk Test by visiting: [stopdiabetes.com](http://stopdiabetes.com) or by calling 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).

Alert Day is also the perfect time to make an appointment for a Comprehensive Foot Exam by your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle physician. To schedule your exam, call our office at 248-545-0100.

## Prepare for Spring Walks

Spring officially arrives on March 20. Temperatures moderate and the snow clears. It is time to get back walking outside.

Whether you are walking for exercise, leisure, or to get to a specific destination, below are 10 tips you should keep in mind.

1. Wear closed toe, comfortable shoes that will not slip. Waterproof boots should be worn if melting snow and ice remain.
2. Consider what you are wearing and choose clothes that drivers can easily see. Light or bright colors, reflective material and flashing lights are best.
3. If you have a choice about where you walk, choose a route with sidewalks or a shoulder to give yourself space away from traffic.



4. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic.
5. Important things to carry with you are water, a driver's license or ID, and a cell phone.
6. Always look for cars before crossing a street or stepping off a curb.
7. Use crosswalks and follow traffic signals when crossing at street lights.
8. Be predictable.
9. Before stepping in front of a car make eye contact with the driver. Make sure they see you, plan on stopping and have time to stop.
10. Pedestrians legally have the right of way, however, not all drivers pay close attention to walkers.



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