

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



Lee Hoffman, DPM
Brian Kissel, DPM
Charles Kissel, DPM
Michael Schey, DPM
David Ungar, DPM
Marc Weitzman, DPM

MEET OUR TEAM

Jenn Alexander

One of the people that you see quite frequently in the office is Jenn Alexander. Jenn has worked for NorthPointe Foot & Ankle for over eight years - starting the year the practice was opened.

As a receptionist, she greets you at the front desk and is one of the people that regularly answers your phone calls.

Whether checking patients in or out, she is there to help you with scheduling appointments or to assist you with your account.

Jenn loves the interaction with patients and is quick to remember your name.



She is happily married and excited to be a new homeowner. Jenn enjoys traveling, camping and spending time with her recently adopted puppy, Liberty.

NorthPointe News



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BUNIONS

Even though bunions are a common foot deformity, there are misconceptions about them. Many people may unnecessarily suffer the pain of bunions for years before seeking treatment.

What is a Bunion?

A bunion is often described as a bump on the side of the big toe. But a bunion is more than that. The visible bump actually reflects changes in the bony framework of the front part of the foot. The big toe leans toward the second toe, rather than pointing straight ahead. This throws the bones out of alignment – producing the bunion's "bump."

Bunions are a progressive disorder. They begin with a leaning of the big toe, gradually changing the angle of the bones over the years and slowly producing the characteristic bump, which becomes increasingly prominent.

Causes

Bunions are most often caused by an inherited faulty mechanical structure of the foot. It is not the bunion itself that is inherited, but certain foot types that make a person prone to developing a bunion.

Although wearing shoes that crowd the toes won't actually cause bunions, it sometimes makes the deformity get progressively worse.

Symptoms

Symptoms, which occur at the site of the bunion, may include:

- Pain or soreness
- Inflammation and redness
- A burning sensation
- Possible numbness

Symptoms occur most often when wearing shoes that crowd the toes, such as shoes with a tight toe box or high heels. In addition, spending long periods of time on your feet can aggravate the symptoms of bunions.

Because bunions are progressive, they don't go away, and will usually get worse over time. Not all cases are alike – some bunions progress more rapidly than others. Your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle surgeon will evaluate your bunion and a treatment plan will be developed that is suited to your needs.

Treatment

Sometimes observation of the bunion is all that's needed. To reduce the chance of damage to the joint, periodic evaluation and x-rays are advised.

In many other cases, however, some type of treatment is needed. Early treatments are aimed at easing the pain of bunions, but they won't reverse the deformity itself. These include:

- **Changes in shoe wear.** Wearing the right kind of shoes is very important. Choose shoes that have a wide toe box and forgo those with pointed toes or high heels which may aggravate the condition.
- **Padding.** Pads placed over the area of the bunion can help minimize pain. These can be obtained from your surgeon or purchased at a drug store.
- **Activity modifications.** Avoid activity that causes bunion pain, including standing for long periods of time.
- **Medications.** Oral non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen, may be recommended to reduce pain and inflammation.
- **Icing.** Applying an ice pack several times a day helps reduce inflammation and pain.
- **Injection therapy.** Although rarely used in bunion treatment, injections of corticosteroids may be useful in treating the inflamed bursa sometimes seen with bunions.
- **Orthotic devices.** In some cases, custom orthotic devices may be provided by the foot and ankle surgeon.

If non-surgical treatments fail to relieve bunion pain and when the pain of a bunion interferes with daily activities, it's time to discuss surgical options with your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle surgeon. Together you can decide if surgery is best for you.

A variety of surgical procedures are available to treat bunions. The procedures are designed to remove the "bump" of bone, correct the changes in the bony structure of the foot, and correct soft tissue changes that may also have occurred. The goal of surgery is the reduction of pain.



To receive our monthly newsletter, send your email address to: Doctors@NorthPointeFoot.com



Stay Balanced

Many people experience increasing difficulty with balance and safe mobility as they age, which leads to the common and serious problem of falls. These problems are associated with loss of confidence and decreasing ability to function independently. In many cases it leads to the consideration of institutional care. Injuries from falls are a major cause of death in the older population. Fortunately, most causes of falls and instability can be treated successfully and the risk of falling reduced.



How common are falls and balance problems in older persons?

Each year, falls occur in over a third of persons over age 65, and in over half of persons over age 75. About a third of the older population reports some difficulty with balance or ambulation. This percentage increases in frequency and severity after age 75.

What are the major causes of falls?

The most common causes of falls include environmental hazards (such as slippery floors and loose rugs), weak muscles, unstable balance, dizziness, vision problems and side effects from medications (such as dizziness and confusion).

How can I tell if I am at risk for falling?

The most important predictors of fall risk include: muscle weakness (difficulty rising from a sitting position without use of hands to push off); unsteady balance (needing to walk slowly or with a wide base of support to maintain balance); having fallen in the past year; and taking certain

medications (some blood pressure medications as well as psychoactive medications, such as sedatives or anti-depressants).

What can I do to decrease my chances of falling?

Ask your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle physician to evaluate your strength, balance, gait, entire medication list and overall risk factors for falls. The chances are good that there will be a number of things that can be done to reduce fall risk, such as adjusting medications, obtaining physical therapy, starting an exercise regimen, or receiving an assistive device such as a cane or walker, to make walking safer.

How can I make my home environment safer?

There are many pamphlets available to assist in hazard-proofing your home environment. Alternatively, a home health provider, such as a visiting nurse or occupational therapist, can come to your home and provide a hands-on inspection and set of recommendations. Common recommendations include installing bathroom grab bars, improving lighting in key areas, removing hazardous conditions on the floor, and making stairways and entrance areas safer.

What kind of walking aids are available and whom should I talk to about getting the right product?

A whole spectrum of walking aids are widely available, ranging from simple canes to elaborate types of walkers and wheelchairs. Any walking aid should be carefully measured to the right size and provide the optimal level of stability without creating too much dependency. Your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle physician can help you with proper fit and advice.

Footwear and Fall Prevention

Choosing the right kind of footwear is an important factor in reducing your risk for falls. Here are a few recommendations to keep you safe and help avoid falling:

- Avoid shoes that are excessively flexible and worn.
- Proper fit is critical. Shoes that are too big can be a hazard, but so can shoes that are too small. Ill-fitting shoes can cause calluses, corns, and sores.
- Avoid excessively slick-soled shoes, as well as those that are too "grippy." A crepe sole is recommended because it also absorbs shock.
- Wearing shoes with low heels and a large or wide contact area may reduce the risk of a fall in everyday settings and activities. Anything with a very high or thick sole creates more imbalance. Avoid any shoe with a sole over half an inch.



American Diabetes Association. **ALERT! DAY** American Diabetes Association Alert Day March 22, 2016

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. Individuals should to take the Diabetes Risk Test and encourage family and friends to do the same. The test is free and only takes a few minutes. Visit www.Diabetes.org to answer the questions on line, or create a printout of the test.

NorthPointe Foot & Ankle encourages anyone with risk factors to schedule a Comprehensive Foot Exam to find out if treatment is needed.

