



WHERE DO CORNS & CALLUSES FORM?

A corn or callus is a thickening of the outer layer of skin on your foot. **Corns** usually grow on top of the foot, often at a toe joint. **Calluses** spread on the bottom of the foot or on the outer edge of a toe or the heel.

Corns

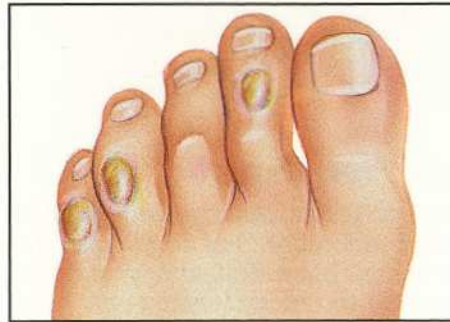
Corns can range from a slight thickening of skin to a painful, hard bump. They often form on top of buckled toe joints (**hammer toes**). If your toes curl under, corns may grow on the tips of the toes. You may also get a corn on the end of a toe if it rubs against your shoe. Corns can also grow between toes, often between the first and second toes.

Calluses

A callus may spread across the ball of your foot. This type of callus is usually due to a problem with a **metatarsal** (the long bone at the base of a toe, near the ball of the foot). A pinch callus may grow along the outer edge of the heel or the big toe. Some calluses press up into the foot instead of spreading on the outside. A callus may form a central core or plug of tissue where pressure is greatest.

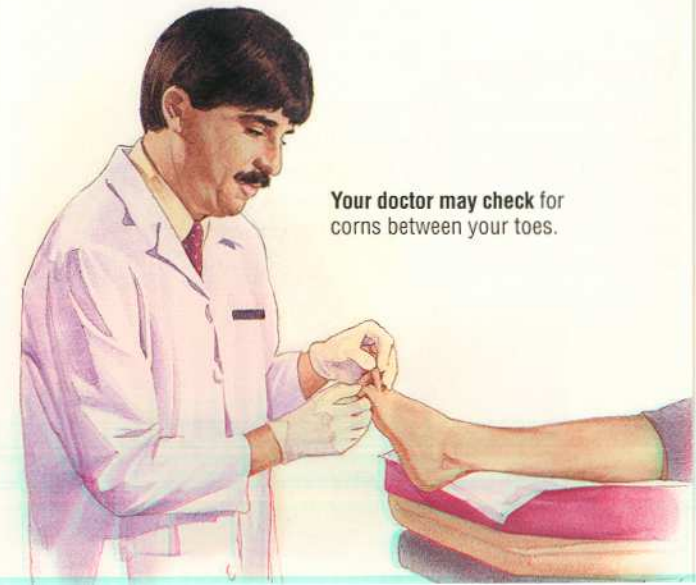
WHAT ARE CORNS & CALLUSES?

Corns and calluses are your body's response to friction or pressure against the skin. If your foot rubs inside your shoe, the affected area of skin thickens. Or if a bone is not in the normal position, skin caught between bone and shoe or bone and ground builds up. In either case, the outer layer of skin thickens to protect the foot from unusual pressure. In many cases, corns and calluses look bad but are not harmful. However, more severe corns and calluses may become infected, destroy healthy tissue, or affect foot movement. But with your doctor's help, corns and calluses can be controlled.



Your Physical Exam

Your doctor will check your feet for skin changes, such as red areas, blisters, and warts. He or she will also look for corns and calluses. If you have a buckled toe joint, your doctor may test its flexibility. He or she may also look for a misaligned bone or collapsed joint. An x-ray may be taken to pinpoint a suspected bone problem.



Your doctor may check for corns between your toes.

Footnote

Don't attempt "home surgery" on corns or calluses. Doing so may damage healthy skin or cause an infection.

TREATING CORNS & CALLUSES

If your corns or calluses are mild, reducing friction may help. Different shoes, moleskin patches, or soft pads may be all the treatment you need. In more severe cases, treating tissue buildup may require your doctor's care. Sometimes **orthoses** (custom-made shoe inserts) are prescribed to reduce friction and pressure.

Change Shoes

If you have corns, your doctor may suggest wearing shoes that have more toe room. This way, buckled joints are less likely to be pinched against the top of the shoe. If you have calluses, wearing a cushioned insole, arch support, or heel counter can help reduce friction.

Visit Your Doctor

In some cases, your doctor may trim away the outer layers of skin that make up the corn or callus. For a painful corn, medication may be injected beneath the built-up tissue.



Wear Orthoses

Orthoses are specially made to meet the needs of your feet. They cushion calluses or divert pressure away from these problem areas. Worn as directed, orthoses help limit existing problems and prevent new ones from forming.



IF YOU NEED SURGERY

If a bone or joint is out of place, certain parts of your foot may be under too much pressure. This can cause severe corns and calluses. In such cases, surgery is often the best way to correct the problem.



Outpatient Procedures

In most cases, surgery to improve bone position is an outpatient procedure. Your doctor may shave or cut away excess bone. Sometimes tendons or ligaments are cut to reduce tension on a bone or joint. Your doctor will talk with you about the procedure that is best suited to your needs.

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