

Calluses of the Foot

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What It Is, Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment

What are Calluses?

Calluses are thickened, hardened areas of skin that develop on the feet as a protective response to repeated friction, pressure, or irritation. While they are generally harmless, calluses can sometimes cause discomfort or pain, especially if they become too thick or develop in sensitive areas. This article explores what calluses are, their causes, symptoms, treatment options, and a conclusion on managing this common foot condition.



Calluses are areas of thickened skin that form on the feet, particularly on the heels, balls of the feet, or sides of the toes. They develop as the skin's natural defense mechanism to protect against repeated friction, pressure, or irritation. Calluses are typically larger than corns and have a more diffuse, less defined edge. They are usually painless but can become uncomfortable if they grow too thick or crack.

Causes of Calluses

Calluses develop due to prolonged pressure or friction on the skin. Common causes include:

1. Ill-Fitting Footwear:



- Shoes that are too tight, too loose, or have high heels can create excessive pressure on specific areas of the foot.

2. Abnormal Foot Mechanics:

- Conditions like bunions, hammertoes, or flat feet can alter weight distribution, leading to callus formation.

3. High-Impact Activities:

- Running, walking, or standing for long periods can increase pressure on the feet.

4. Barefoot Walking:

- Walking barefoot, especially on hard surfaces, can cause the skin to thicken.

5. Age:

- As people age, the fat pads on the feet thin out, reducing natural cushioning and increasing the risk of calluses.

6. Occupational Factors:

- Jobs that require prolonged standing or walking can contribute to callus formation.

Symptoms of Calluses

The most common symptoms of calluses include:



- **Thickened Skin:** Hard, rough, or raised patches of skin on the feet.
- **Dry or Flaky Skin:** The affected area may appear dry or cracked.
- **Discomfort or Pain:** Calluses can cause pain, especially when walking or wearing shoes.
- **Yellowish or Grayish Color:** Calluses often have a discolored appearance compared to the surrounding skin.

- **Tenderness:** The area may feel tender or sensitive to touch.



Treatment Options for Calluses

Treatment for calluses focuses on reducing thickness, relieving discomfort, and addressing the underlying cause. Common treatment options include:

1. Proper Footwear:

- Wear well-fitting shoes with adequate cushioning and support to reduce pressure on the feet.

2. Pumice Stone or Foot File:

- Gently rub the callus with a pumice stone or foot file after soaking the feet in warm water to soften the skin.



3. Moisturizers:

- Apply a thick moisturizing cream or lotion to keep the skin soft and prevent cracking.

4. Callus Pads:

- Use over-the-counter callus pads or cushions to protect the affected area from friction.

5. Orthotics:

- Custom or over-the-counter orthotic inserts can help redistribute pressure and prevent callus formation.

6. Trimming:

- A healthcare professional can safely trim down thickened calluses using sterile tools.

7. Medicated Products:



- Use salicylic acid-based creams or patches to soften and reduce calluses. Follow the instructions carefully to avoid skin irritation.

8. Medical Treatment:

- In severe cases, a podiatrist may recommend debridement (removal of thickened skin) or other medical interventions including metatarsal surgery.

METATARSAL SURGERY



Prevention Tips

To prevent calluses from forming or recurring:

- Wear shoes that fit properly and provide adequate support.
- Use cushioned insoles or orthotics to reduce pressure on the feet.
- Keep your feet clean and moisturized to prevent dryness and cracking.
- Avoid walking barefoot on hard surfaces.
- Address underlying foot conditions like bunions or hammertoes with proper treatment.

Conclusion

Calluses are a common and often harmless condition that develops as the skin's protective response to friction and pressure. While they are usually not a cause for concern, they can become uncomfortable or painful if left untreated. By understanding the causes and symptoms of calluses, individuals can take steps to manage and prevent them effectively. Proper footwear, regular foot care, and addressing underlying foot issues are key to maintaining healthy, callus-free feet. If calluses persist or cause significant discomfort, consult a healthcare professional for personalized treatment and advice. With the right care, you can keep your feet smooth, comfortable, and pain-free.