

Corns and calluses

What are corns and calluses?

When we walk or stand, our body weight is carried first on the heel and then on the ball of the foot, where the skin is thicker to withstand the pressure. When this pressure becomes intense, growths can appear in the form of corns and calluses.

Callus

A callus is an area of thickened skin on the soles of the feet, occurring on areas of pressure. It is the body's natural reaction to pressure or friction, and can appear anywhere where the skin rubs against a bone, a shoe or the ground. Callus plaques appear as hard, dense, yellowish areas. Most calluses are not painful.

Corns

A corn is an area of callus which has become moulded into a nucleus. There are different types of corn:

- **Hard corns.** These are the most common type of corn. They appear as a small, concentrated area of hard skin, up to the size of a small pea.
- **Soft corns.** These are white in colour and rubbery in texture. They appear between the toes where the skin is moist from sweat or inadequate drying.
- **Seed corns.** These are tiny corns that tend to occur either singly or in clusters on the bottom of the feet. They are usually painless.

Advice

Footwear

Many corns and calluses are caused by ill-fitting shoes. Shoes should have a fastening (for example, laces or Velcro), plenty of room for the toes and offer good support. Make sure your shoes are the correct size for your feet – get shoes fitted correctly and ask to have your feet measured. Buying shoes in the afternoon is recommended, as your feet swell during the day.

Keep any slightly more impractical shoes and slippers for use a few hours at a time, not all day.

Over-the-counter pads

Many shops sell gel or foam pads to help cushion painful joints. These can be very helpful for corns on the tops of toes.

Cushioning insoles such as gel or memory foam can provide extra padding in shoes for areas on the soles of the feet.

Further information

For further information, visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/corns-and-calluses/

or

<https://rcpod.org.uk/common-foot-problems/corns-callus>

Please ask if you need this leaflet in an alternative format.