Overview
Hammer toe is a deformity in which the toe contracts in a cocked position. Hammer toes can be flexible, but in some cases the joint may be rigid.

Causes
The muscles and tendons of the toe may tighten and shorten in certain types of feet, such as flat feet or feet with bunions. Hammer toe also can be caused by wearing shoes that are too small. Other common causes include injury or arthritis.

Symptoms
Movement of the affected toe joint is often limited and painful, and redness and swelling may occur within the joint. Ulcers may form on the ball of the foot as a result of changes in gait, and a corn may develop on top of the affected toe.

Treatment
Treatment will vary depending upon the stage of the condition. Nonsurgical treatments include wearing shoes that fit properly, using orthotics, or padding calluses. Surgical treatments include realigning the toe by cutting a tendon or reconstructing the toe joint (arthroplasty).