

CALLUS AND CORNS

WHAT IS CALLUS?

Callus is an area of extra, thickened skin that the body lays down to protect itself in response to repetitive friction or pressure. Callus on the feet is often caused by poorly-fitting footwear, going sockless, or as a result of biomechanical/anatomical problems.

If the callus is not causing a problem you can leave it alone as it may be providing a natural protective barrier. If it is uncomfortable, however, it may require removing by a podiatrist using a blade (do **NOT** attempt this yourself!).

Alternatively, regular self-treatment using a file or pumice stone may help to keep it in check. If advised, you should change your footwear and keep your feet well moisturised.

In some cases your podiatrist may provide some insoles that will help slow the development of painful callus.

WHAT IS A CORN?

A corn is a similar skin reaction to callus but the skin build-up is a lot more focused creating a small and (usually) painful plug that extends deeper into the skin. There are 3 main types that appear regularly in podiatry clinics:

1. Hard Corn

These appear on bony areas, typically on the top of the toe joints or on the ball of the foot. These tend to be caused by pressure. If they have been present for a long time, or have a history of self-treatment (particularly self-cutting or the use of corn plasters) they may become bigger, more painful, and more fibrous in nature.

2. Soft Corn

These typically occur in between the toes and have a white, rubbery texture. They usually occur as a result of excess moisture that becomes trapped after failing to dry thoroughly following washing, or from sweating. You could try a dab of surgical spirit to help dry any affected areas.

3. Seed Corns

These are small, hard corns that tend to group in clusters and are often seen on the arches and heels of the feet. They are heavily associated with dry skin but are usually pain-free. If they cause you a problem then creaming your feet regularly should help stop them recurring.

A fourth, but rarer, type of corn is the neurovascular corn that has a tiny blood and nerve supply. As a result they often bleed when being treated and are intensely painful. If you're unlucky enough to suffer from this type of corn your podiatrist will be best placed to treat and advise you.

As with callus, corns often need professional removal using a sharp blade. The podiatrist will offer guidance on general care, padding and footwear, and may even provide insoles for long-standing or very painful corns.

Do **NOT** attempt to remove corns yourself using anything sharp – this is particularly important if you suffer from diabetes. Avoid the use of corn plasters as they often contain an acid that can burn the surrounding healthy skin as well.

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about the problem with your foot. This leaflet is not a substitute for professional medical advice and should be used in conjunction with verbal information and treatment given.