



## Patient Avoids Surgery and Finds Foot Pain Relief with In-office, Incision-free Procedure

Susan Rains was leery about visiting another podiatrist after having failed bunion surgery several years ago, which required extensive healing time. A few years later, she saw another podiatrist for a hammertoe on her second toe. Her third and fourth toes were also crooked; they laid sideways and formed two calluses, which caused her foot pain when they rubbed against her shoes.

This podiatrist told her that surgery was the only recourse for fixing the hammertoe and crooked toes and would require significant healing time. Susan wouldn't be able to drive because the affected toes were on her right foot – her driving foot. For Susan, who lives independently, having to depend on others to get around would have been very inconvenient, and she didn't want another major foot surgery.

A hammertoe is a bend in a toe that won't go away. This painful condition develops because of imbalances in the muscles, tendons or ligaments. When working correctly, the toes stay straight. But when foot structure, shoe choices, injuries or illnesses throw the toes off balance, a crook may remain in place even when the toes are relaxed.

Susan learned about Westfield Foot and Ankle and Dr. David Sullivan after seeing an ad in her local edition of the Current promoting an in-office, incision-free procedure for fixing hammertoes. Even after seeing the ad, Susan still took a little while to get up her courage to call the office, but she is "so glad that she did." The procedure the ad was promoting is called a flexor tenotomy.

While surgery is one way to relieve the pain of hammertoes, Dr. Sullivan offers surgery-free pain relief for hammertoes that can be minorly adjusted by hand with the flexor tenotomy, an in-office procedure. The flexor tenotomy is one of Dr. Sullivan's favorite procedures because the



**Susan Rains**

results are immediate. The patient doesn't receive any stitches. The site of the procedure is dressed in a few band-aids, and the patient can continue with their day and resume normal activities. The flexor tenotomy uses local anesthesia. It involves piercing the skin on the bottom of the toe, beneath the deformed joint and releasing the tendon keeping the toe contracted. After the procedure is completed, the toe is dressed and splinted with two or three band-aids.

The toe that once only touched the ground at its tip will now lay flatter, and the patient's pain will be dramatically less or will experience no pain. After the procedure, the toe will still look bent at rest but flatten when the patient stands. Since the patient doesn't have surgery, they don't have to worry about severe complications and can save thousands of dollars.

After receiving a thorough examination and learning more about the flexor tenotomy procedure from Dr. Sullivan, Susan decided to move forward. Her hammertoe was limiting her footwear choices and causing discomfort when Susan pursued one of her favorite pastimes, hiking.

An avid hiker, Susan has trekked Iceland and Glacier National Park. Dr. Sullivan also performed the flexor tenotomy procedure on her crooked toes and her fifth toe, which had curved underneath the fourth toe. These toes now lay flat as well. "It was just wonderful! They're all straight and I am so happy!" said Susan. "Not only do my toes look better, but they feel better."

A former nurse practitioner, Susan appreciates that Dr. Sullivan is conservative

### Westfield Foot and Ankle

16411 Southpark Dr., Suite B  
Westfield, IN 46074  
Phone: (317) 896-6655  
Fax : (317) 896-6081

### Office Hours

Mon: 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Tues: 9:00 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Wed: 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Thurs: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Fri: 8:30 a.m.- 12 noon  
Sat. & Sun. - Closed

### Meet Our Doctor



**David R. Sullivan,**  
DPM, FACFAS, FACCWS

[www.westfieldfoot.com](http://www.westfieldfoot.com)



in his treatment and offers other alternatives to common foot conditions that don't involve surgery. Susan would recommend that others come to Westfield Foot and Ankle because Dr. Sullivan "is very personable, professional and kind, and the office staff is very patient and friendly."

# Trick or Treat But Watch Your Feet!



Whether you're chaperoning your little ones around the neighborhood or attending an annual costume party, don't forget about your feet this Halloween. Before you plan your outfit, we want to remind you of the importance of your shoe choice. We've put together tips to help you avoid scary surprises the next day, such foot, ankle or heel pain.

**1. Choose warm and supportive foot gear.** By the end of October, the nights can be chilly. Choose weather appropriate and supportive insulated athletic shoes or winter boots that support your arches and leave wiggle room for your toes. If you regularly wear orthotics, try to incorporate those shoes into your costume. Avoid wearing shoes with worn or low soles.

**2. Carefully choose your socks.** Materials such as wool (specifically Merino wool) and synthetics such as nylon and Lycra do a better job at keeping feet drier and preventing athlete's foot. Also, be careful about the texture and thickness of your socks, since a textured or bulky sock can rub against shoes and lead to blisters.

**3. Be smart about costumes.** If children's costumes come with novelty footwear, make sure that they swap them out for supportive footwear when it's time to leave the house. Otherwise, kids have a higher chance of falling or sustaining injury. Also check costume length. Many kids' costumes start dragging on the ground as the night wears on, again increasing the risk for trips and falls. Watch for hanging hemlines and make any necessary adjustments before getting back on the Halloween trick or treat trail.

**4. Keep heel heights low.** Adult costumes matter, too. Limit heel heights to 1 ½ inches for Halloween costumes. Even if you're simply staying home and handing out candy, spending hours in high heels will increase your risk for future complications such as bunions and hammertoes.

**5. Stop for lace checks.** Make sure to regularly tie and check children's shoe laces. Between the night's excitement and many sugar rushes, it's easy for an untied lace to go unnoticed, leading to trips, falls and painful foot injuries.

**6. Take breaks often.** If you notice that you're walking in pain, it's time to stop and take a break. If you continue walking in discomfort the entire night, you may be in even more pain the next morning. Encourage your children to do the same.

If you wear the wrong shoes and feel foot, ankle or heel pain the next day, we're always here to help. Contact our office right away to schedule an appointment with Dr. Sullivan.

## 7 Tips for Diabetic Footcare



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, type 2 diabetes accounts for 90 to 95 percent of all diagnosed cases diabetes in adults. That's why this Diabetes Awareness Month, we're sharing tips for preventing diabetic complications in the feet.

Diabetics can end up losing their toes or feet to amputation. That's because high blood sugar levels and poor circulation, combined with nerve damage and infections, increase their risk for non-healing diabetic foot ulcers. Following the tips below and regularly scheduling visits to see us at the office will help minimize your risk of diabetic foot complications.

**1. Check your feet daily.** Check between your toes, along your soles, your heels, and the outside edges of your feet for any cuts, blisters, bruises, or punctures. These abrasions can quickly turn into problematic ulcers if left untreated.

**2. Check your nerves.** Diabetic patients often lose feeling in their extremities due to nerve damage that comes with the disease. Take a blunt object, like a pencil eraser, and run it along the entire bottom of your foot to make sure you still have feeling. If you notice you're losing any feeling, give us a call.

**3. Wash and dry your feet well.** Clean, dry feet are much less likely to develop ulcers. Use warm water, not too hot, and mild soap to wash your feet every day. When you are done, use a soft towel to dry your feet – don't forget between the toes!

**4. Cut your toenails properly.** Trim your toenail straight across, never rounded or curved, and never too short. Curved edges can cut into your skin and cause ingrown toenails, which can quickly become infected and problematic.

**5. Eat right for your feet.** Talk to your doctor about a proper diet for your condition and follow that diet well. It's also important to check your glucose levels as needed.

**6. Wear the right shoes.** Ones that are too tight can squeeze and ones that are too loose can rub. When you buy new shoes, do so at the end of the day, when your feet are their largest.

**7. Cut back on bad habits.** Constricted blood vessels from smoking or accelerated nerve damage from drinking can lead to more rapid infections in a cut or wound.

**Good to know...** Dr. David Sullivan is a board-certified foot surgeon and wound specialist and can perform in office procedures such as wound care, biopsies, skin grafts, ingrown toenail removal, etc. Having patients come to our office vs. a hospital setting can help relieve the hospital resources as well as minimizing patient exposure.

Disclaimer: Content of this newsletter may not be used or reproduced without written permission of the author. This newsletter is not intended to replace the services of a doctor. No expressed or implied guarantees have been made or are made by the author or publisher. Information in this newsletter is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice.