

## The Question???

I am a dancer who has very strong feet when en pointe.  
I have had many brands and shank varieties and none have worked. Can you help?

This question is just one of many inquiries I have received from dancers, with problems finding a pointe shoe that will 'work' for them.

With so many pointe shoe choices being sold today, how do we know what to try? An incorrect purchase is expensive, time consuming, frustrating and can result in the dancer using a shoe that offers no placement, no balance, breaks down too quickly or does not break in at all.

Unless the dancer is a professional and has her shoes customized to her needs, she will undoubtedly be slamming her shoes in a door jam, stepping on the toe boxes, bending the shanks over a ballet barre and soaking the vamps to soften them hoping to make the shoes conform to what the dancer thinks will give her a perfect fitting shoe.

So, why does that extra hard shank that worked so well for the first two classes seem to have no support thereafter?

## The Answer!!

To address this we need to know if the dancer's toes and metatarsal are placed in the shoe correctly. Is there proper lateral support in the construction of the shoe or are the shoes 'propping her up' due to the new, hard shank and toe box?

If placement and support is not correct, the box softens, support lessens and the dancer's toes begin curling under (knuckling) and pressure is placed on the Metatarsal phalangeal joints. This results in the knuckles pressing into the vamp causing the vamp to soften and the shank to break down incorrectly. There is no longer shank or vamp "support" due to how the foot is placed in the shoe. Simply, she is dancing ON the shoe not IN it.

When en pointe the widest part of the metatarsal should be as low into the toe box as possible. The toes should be straight down touching the inside of the pointe shoe platform with toes connecting with the floor. If the widest part of the foot is up close to the throat of the vamp (at the draw string or V) then the shoes are not accommodating the width of the metatarsal properly. The result will be shank break down and softened toe boxes..

Dancers having shallow, moderate, average or strong foot construction all have the same need. It is imperative that the shoes work with, not against the foot and the design of the shoe permits proper placement in the shoe. Prima Soft pointe shoes are designed to address this issue and as a result are longer lasting with excellent support, balance and placement.

Marlena Juniman – President Prima Soft Dancewear

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## Bone Spurs and Ballet Marlena Juniman – Prima Soft Dancewear

We read many articles about the need for proper foot and body strength as well as correct technique when beginning pointe work. While these factors are vitally important to dancing en pointe, we should also address the proper fit and function of the pointe shoe. From the moment a dancer is introduced to pointe she becomes susceptible to a myriad of foot problems.

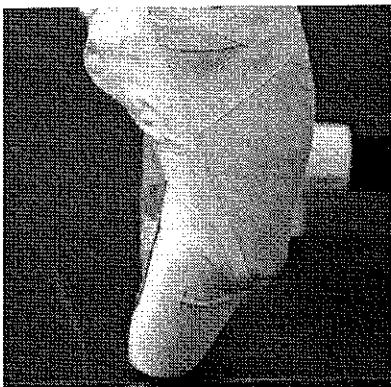
The Bone Spur, (osteophyte) a bump like bunion or callus that can develop on the top of the metatarsophalangeal (MTP) big toe joint can result from wearing pointe shoes not suitable for that particular dancer's foot structure.

In the MTP joint, the end of the bone is covered with *articular cartilage*, a slick substance that aids in smooth joint movement. Should this cartilage break down the result is 'bone on bone' misalignment of the joints. The body, trying to heal itself will then produce a bone spur.

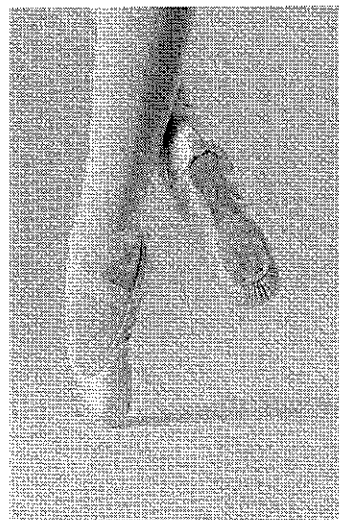
One way to help prevent Osteophytes from forming is to pay particular attention to the fit and structure of your pointe shoes. Some of the factors to consider when trying shoes are: Lateral support from the shoes 'wings' and shank, suitable vamp height, correct width of the toe box and platform. Also, is the pointe shoe the correct style /model for you?

A vamp that is too short, not encapsulating the toes, will cause pressure between the toe joints forcing the Tarso Metatarsal to hang over the 'throat' of the toe box. A vamp that is too long and narrow will not permit the metatarsals to place correctly into the toe box forcing the toes to 'knuckle over the throat of the shoe. These factors cause constant pressure between the joints and may result in bone misalignment and contribute to the beginning of a bone spur. Shoes that are too short putting excess pressure on the longest toe(s) forcing them to bend under in the toe box, can also contribute to bone spurs.

Incorrectly fit shoes will hinder the dancers balance and placement and compromise the wear of the shoes. Being aware of potential problems and having your shoes fit by a professional can protect your feet and your future.



Incorrect fit.



Correct fit