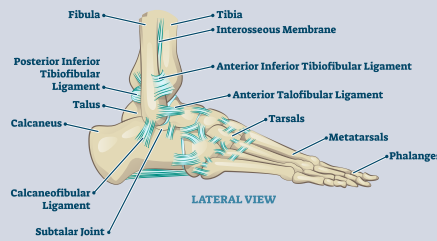


Foot and Ankle Conditions and Treatments



FOOT AND ANKLE ARTHRITIS

The foot is a complex body part composed of 28 bones that form more than 30 joints to stabilize your foot and aid in walking. A smooth covering of cartilage protects the bone surfaces and provides cushion as the joint moves freely. Arthritis is a condition in which cartilage deterioration and joint inflammation lead to decreased joint spacing.

Three types of arthritis can affect the foot and ankle.

OSTEOARTHRITIS

The most common form of arthritis. This condition includes progressive wear and tear of the cartilage that typically affects middle-aged and elderly people.

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

A chronic, inflammatory disease that causes swelling of the joint lining and damage to the cartilage. This condition occurs more frequently in middle-aged women. Systemic symptoms such as fever, loss of energy and appetite changes can occur.

Patients with this condition often have flare-ups during which more than one joint becomes painful and stiff. Other inflammatory conditions (gout, psoriatic arthritis and lupus) can cause arthritis as well.

TRAUMATIC ARTHRITIS

This can develop after an injury to the foot or ankle, such as a fracture, dislocation or severe ligament injury. Over time, the cartilage may wear away similar to osteoarthritis.

Symptoms Include

- Progressive “aching” pain
- Swelling
- Stiffness
- Difficulty walking

In patients with arthritis, x-rays can show bones spurs, joint deformity, and decreasing joint space indicative of cartilage loss.

Treatment Options

There are multiple treatment options for foot and ankle arthritis. You and your doctor can formulate a plan based on disease severity, location and type of arthritis.

ACTIVITY MODIFICATION

For early stages of arthritis, activity modification such as swimming and biking instead of running can reduce stress on the joint. Losing weight if overweight can be of benefit, as it will decrease the pressure across your joints while weight bearing. Using assistive devices such as a cane and wearing orthotics or supportive shoes can decrease pain and provide support.

MEDICATIONS

Anti-inflammatory medications reduce swelling and pain associated with arthritis. Glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate are natural substances found in and around cartilage. Oral supplementation of this is available over the counter and may help increase joint mobility.

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INJECTIONS

Cortisone is a potent anti-inflammatory medication and can decrease pain and swelling when injected directly into a joint.

If arthritis does not respond to the conservative treatment, surgery may be an option. The type of surgery depends on the location and severity of disease.

A joint fusion is a surgery in which the damaged cartilage is removed. Pins, screws or plates are used to hold the bones together, fusing them into one. This is a successful procedure to relieve pain; however, motion is limited in the fused joint.

Depending on the location of the arthritis, a joint replacement surgery may be performed. During a joint replacement, the damaged cartilage and bone is removed and replaced with an artificial implant.

While developing an arthritis treatment plan with your physician, it's important to discuss risks and expected outcomes with the available treatment options.