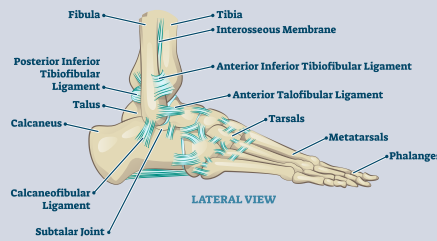


Foot and Ankle Conditions and Treatments



FOOT AND ANKLE PAIN

Foot and ankle pain can be caused by a variety of things, including injury, arthritis, wear and tear, and other conditions. Treatment will depend on the underlying cause of the pain.

Common causes of foot and ankle pain include:

Plantar fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis is a common cause of foot and ankle pain. It's one of the most common causes of stabbing heel pain and is caused by inflammation of the plantar fascia, a long, thin ligament that runs under the skin along the bottom of the foot. It connects the heel to the front of the foot and supports the arch. It absorbs a lot of stress and strain, and too much can damage or tear the ligament, which causes inflammation, heel pain and stiffness.

Runners and those who are overweight often suffer from plantar fasciitis. It often hurts as soon as you take steps after getting out of bed and subsides with walking. It can also cause more pain after exercise or activity and can make walking difficult. Treatment options include rest, icing, injections, orthotics, splints, injections, physical therapy and stretching.

Achilles tendinitis

Achilles tendonitis is another common source of foot and ankle pain caused by overuse. It is caused by inflammation of the Achilles tendon, a band of tissue that connects the calf muscle to the heel bone.

The Achilles tendon is the largest tendon in the body. It's used continually while walking, running, climbing, jumping and standing on tip-toes. Achilles tendonitis can be painful and may make it difficult to walk or run. Treatment options include rest, icing, physical therapy, cortisone injections, splinting, orthotics and stretching. If pain doesn't improve after six months on conservative management, surgery may be offered.

Arthritis of the foot and ankle

Arthritis is a common cause of foot and ankle pain. There are many different types of arthritis, but the most common type that affects the feet and ankles is osteoarthritis (wear-and-tear arthritis). Post-traumatic arthritis can result from trauma, such as a fracture to the ankle or big toe. Osteoarthritis causes swelling, pain and stiffness. Treatment options include pain relief medications, orthotics, physical therapy and surgery.

Hallux Rigidus (Stiff Big Toe)

Hallux rigidus is arthritis of the base big toe that causes bone spurs. Symptoms include stiffness and pain in the big toe that is so painful you may start walking on the outside of the foot to avoid the pain.

Treatment may include nonsurgical options such as medication, hot and cold therapy, wearing stiff-soled shoes, physical therapy, and surgery, which may involve removing bone spurs, fusing the bones and replacing the joint.

Posterior Tibial Tendonitis

Posterior tibial tendonitis causes pain and swelling in the ankle and foot. It results from inflammation and tears of the posterior tibial tendon, a band of tissue that connects the calf muscle to the bone on the inside of the foot. The pain occurs along the inside of the foot and ankle and worsens with activity. When the tendon becomes inflamed, it may not be able to support the arch and cause flatfoot. When the arch collapses, the pain will be on the outside of the ankle. Treatments include orthotics and bracing and rest, icing and physical therapy. If those are unsuccessful, surgery may be offered.

Sesamoiditis

Sesamoiditis causes pain in the ball of the foot, usually under the big toe. It's a result of inflammation of the sesamoids, small bones located under the first metatarsal bone (big toe), usually due to overuse. It's often seen in dancers, runners and athletes who stand on their toes. Treatment options include rest, icing, activity modification, taping, injections, bracing and physical therapy.

Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome

Tarsal tunnel syndrome causes pain, numbness and tingling in the foot. It results from entrapment of nerves in the tarsal tunnel, a narrow passageway on the inside of the ankle. It's like carpal tunnel in the wrist. Up to 43% of cases have a history of trauma, including ankle sprains. Diabetes, gout, hypothyroidism and high cholesterol are risk factors. Treatment options include medication, physical therapy and surgery.

Bunions

Bunions are a deformity of the big toe caused by a misalignment of the bones in the joint. Bunions can be painful due to the bump rubbing on the shoe. They usually develop slowly and worsen with time, causing the big toe to lean on the second toe. This also alters foot mechanics and changes the position of ligaments, bone and tendons. Women are more often affected

than men, and 70% of women with bunions have a family history. Treatment options include wearing wider shoes, orthotics, NSAID pain medication and surgery.

Hammertoe

Hammertoe is a deformity of the second, third or fourth toes caused by a muscle imbalance that creates pressure on the toe tendons and joints. If caught early, it can be fixed. Left alone, the affected toes will become inflexible and require surgery. It's most often caused by shoes that are too narrow, forcing the toes to push on smaller toes in a flexed position. This causes corns and calluses and aggravates the condition. Hammertoes are painful, and the inability to bend the toes makes it difficult to wear shoes. Treatment options include over-the-counter medications, cushions/pads, exercises and surgery.

Ingrown Toenails

Ingrown toenails are a condition in which the edges of the toenail grow into the flesh. They are often caused by shoes that are too tight or short. Wearing high heels aggravates the condition. However, trimming toenails to taper at the curves rather than straight across causes the sides of the nail to curl down and dig into the skin. They can be red, swollen and painful and may cause infection. Treatment options include soaking the foot in warm water, wearing loose-fitting shoes, and correctly trimming the nails. In the worst cases, surgery to partially or completely remove the nail will be necessary.

Morton's Neuroma

Morton's neuroma feels like you stepped on a marble that progresses into a sensation of having stepped on a piece of glass in the middle of the ball of the foot. The cause is entrapment of nerves leading to the toes that causes swelling and inflammation. Wearing high heels aggravates the condition. It's more common in women between ages 30 and 60. Treatment options include medication, physical therapy and surgery.