



Foot Pain and Therapy

As shock absorbers, our feet cushion up to one million pounds of pressure during a single hour of strenuous exercise. They also support 1.5 times our body weight during walking and running activities. It is not hard to see why our feet are highly susceptible to injury.

Foot pain is a frequent reason why people visit their doctor. With over 26 bones, 33 joints, and five ligaments, there are many structures that can be injured in the foot. When these structures become injured or overstressed, pain may result, and limited functional mobility can occur. So, let's get to the bottom of why your feet hurt and how Physical Therapy can help.

Plantar Fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis is one of the most common causes of foot pain. It results from irritation of a thick band of tissue, called the plantar fascia, that runs across the bottom of your foot. People with plantar fasciitis experience pain across the bottom of the foot, typically near the inner part of the heel. Discomfort with plantar fasciitis is more common in the morning after waking up and with strenuous exercise like running, although you may feel the heel pain while simply walking. Physical therapy for plantar fasciitis involves using treatments to decrease inflammation and assessing the biomechanics of your foot, ankle, and entire lower extremity. Exercises for plantar fasciitis may include stretching, strengthening, and balance exercises.

Metatarsalgia

Metatarsalgia is a condition used to describe a painful foot condition in the area just before the toes, or the ball-of-the-foot. With prolonged jumping or running activities, an increased stress load is placed on this region. Over time, the metatarsal bones become swollen and pain results.

Posterior Tibial Tendonitis

The posterior tibialis tendon coursed down your inner lower leg and attaches to the bottom of your foot near the arch of your foot. The tendon helps support your foot's natural arch, and irritation here may cause pain, limited walking ability, and flatfoot deformity. Treatment for this posterior tibial tendonitis may include exercises for flexibility and strength, balance exercises, anti-inflammatory modalities, and orthotics.

Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome

Tarsal tunnel syndrome occurs when the main nerve that goes to the foot is compressed by bone or tissue. You may be more familiar with a similar condition in the wrist called "carpal tunnel syndrome." The symptoms of tarsal tunnel syndrome are typically felt on the inside of the foot region and are burning, tingling, and shooting in nature.

Treatment

Physical therapy is often one of the main ways to treat the symptoms of foot pain. Gentle stretching of the foot often helps to alleviate the discomfort felt due to the above disorders. Occasionally with plantar fasciitis, a brace is worn at night to keep the foot in a stretched position.

If you have foot pain, your physical therapist can also offer strategies to help treat your pain and improve your foot function. Check in with your doctor and then visit your physical therapist to learn ways you can overcome your foot pain and return to your normal active lifestyle.

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