

Morton's Neuroma

What is Morton's Neuroma?

Morton's neuroma is a common, painful condition affecting the base of the toes – usually the third and fourth toes. The pain, which is sharp and severe suddenly occurs while walking.

The pain happens because the nerve that divides between the metatarsal bones (toe bones) is irritated or compressed. The cause of this irritation is not exactly known, but it may be the metatarsal bones compressing the nerve when the gap between the bones is narrow. This causes the nerve to thicken. It is rare for more than one nerve to be affected, and it usually only affects one foot.



What causes it?

The exact cause of Morton's neuroma is not always known, although a number of problems seem to aggravate it. Women tend to suffer from Morton's Neuroma more than men due to their choice of footwear. High-heeled shoes or shoes with a pointed or tight toe box, which can compress the toes can cause Morton's Neuroma. Conditions such as a high-arched or flat foot, a bunion or a hammer toe. These can all increase the chance of Morton's Neuroma occurring as they can cause the bones in your feet to rub against a nerve.

What will happen if I leave it untreated?

If left untreated Morton's Neuroma does get worse and can make all weight-bearing activities unbearable. Patients can also develop an abnormal gait due to avoiding placing any pressure or weight on the affected area. A long-term gait abnormality can cause problems with knees, the hips and the back.

What can help?

Anti-inflammatory drugs and a course of steroid injections can also help ease acute pain and inflammation. Pain can be temporarily relieved by resting the foot and massaging the affected toes. You can make an ice pack by freezing a small bottle of water and roll it over the affected area.

What are the treatment options?

Treatment for a Morton's neuroma depends on how long you have had the condition and its severity. Identifying the condition in its early stages will help to avoid the need for surgery.

Custom-made orthotics are necessary to provide support for the arches and reduce the pronation stresses on the forefoot. Flexible orthotics which include specific support for the anterior metatarsal arch are particularly important in this condition, since they decrease the shearing stresses on the forefoot. Orthotics also assist in distributing your weight more evenly over the entire foot, relieving the pressure on the ball of the foot.