

Other information:

Shoes etc:

Wider Fit Shoes: www.widerfitshoes.co.uk Tel: 01933 311077

Simply Feet Tel: 0845 3700380
www.simplyfeet.co.uk

Health and Wellbeing Information:

NHS Inform: Tel: 0800 224488
<http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/msk/>

Health and Wellbeing advice/support
www.smallchangesbigdifference.org Tel: 0800 224488

Walk It – (supported walking activity)
http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/1504/walking_cycling_and_horse_riding/311/walking_for_health Tel: 018350825060



**Metatarsalgia
(Pain in the ball of the foot)**



Information for Patients

With thanks to Musculoskeletal Redesign
Group, NHS Tayside

This leaflet has been divided into sections as follows: **1.** What is metatarsalgia? **2.** What causes it? **3.** Treatment of metatarsalgia and **4.** Surgery for metatarsalgia

1. What is Metatarsalgia?

Metatarsalgia is the name given to pain felt under the Metatarsal heads (the ball of your foot area on the sole) but can also sometimes be felt in the toes depending on the cause. The problem usually starts gradually and is common especially after middle age, but can affect all ages.

Symptoms include:

- Burning or shooting pain on wearing tight shoes worse in high heels
- Affected area feels tender to press
- May feel like walking on pebble or wrinkle in your sock
- Affected toes may feel numb or tingly
- May get worse the more you are on your feet or in certain shoes
- There may be slight swelling of the affected area.

2. What causes metatarsalgia ?

There are many causes of metatarsalgia including:

- Being overweight putting extra stress on the feet
- Overuse, for example jobs that involve a lot of standing on hard surfaces, or doing lots of walking
- Unsupportive, poorly fitting shoes
- An enlarged nerve in the ball of the foot (Morton's neuroma)
- More common in conditions such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis or gout
- Altered foot function

3. What can I do about it?

One of the most important things you can do to help is to wear the right shoes. Try to wear flat, well fitting shoes with plenty of room for your toes. Please see our simple guide on shoe and slipper fitting. Shoes with laces or adjustable strap are best. Avoid high-heeled shoes with pointed toes. Also **avoid shoes which are not wide enough to fit well across the widest part of your foot (across the big toe joint)**. Shoes with stiff soles which are a rocker shape across the forefoot may help reduce painful symptoms.

If your shoes are wide enough, an insole with a metatarsal pad may also help.

You can take over-the-counter medication such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. If in doubt please discuss this with your pharmacist or GP.

Reducing your weight will also reduce the strain on your feet.

As much as possible avoid activities that make the pain worse until your symptoms improve.

If the pain continues to be severe despite trying following this advice for a 3 month period please complete a self-referral form for Podiatry – available from your local health centre.

4. Surgery

If the suggested treatments do not help you may be referred to an orthopaedic clinic to be considered for an operation which will remove the thickened nerve fibre.

An operation should only be considered after all other treatments have been tried for at least 3 months. The recovery time after surgery can be several months with no putting weight on the foot for the first 6 weeks.

Please note you may not be seen by a surgeon at your first clinic appointment. Please see our separate leaflet on Morton's neuroma surgery for more details.