



METATARSALGIA AND MORTON'S NEUROMA

The aim of this leaflet is to give you some understanding of the problems you may have and what you can do to help.

What is a Metatarsalgia and Morton's neuroma?

Metatarsalgia is a general term which means pain in the ball of the foot. Morton's neuroma is one possible cause of metatarsalgia. Pain or numbness may also 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 can 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.

What causes Metatarsalgia and Morton's Neuroma?

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)
- It can be more common in conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis
- Altered foot function
- Clawed or hammer toes can increase pressure on the ball of the foot

What can I do about it?

One of the most important things you can do to help is to wear the right shoes. You should 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). Avoid shoes with flexible soles. Shoes with stiffer, inflexible soles which are slightly rocker shaped across the forefoot can limit bending of the joint during walking and reduce painful symptoms (see picture showing rocker sole).



If your shoes are wide enough, a soft cushioned insole with a metatarsal pad may also help or gel cushioning such as that available from the high street or suppliers listed below.

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

If you would like support with weight loss please click the link on our website for lifestyle advice. As much as possible, avoid activities that make the pain worse until your symptoms improve.

Information for Patients:

To manage any inflammation you can take over-the-counter medication such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. If in doubt please discuss this with your pharmacist or GP.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

In the first instance you should give these first line treatments at least six to 12 weeks to have an effect. If you are noticing improvement, you should continue these treatments until the symptoms are manageable. If they do not improve then self-refer to your local NHS Borders Podiatry clinic using the online self-referral form on this website which is also available in paper form at your local health centre.

Metatarsalgia / Morton's Neuroma Surgery

If these suggested treatments do not help and your forefoot continues to be painful you may be referred to an orthopaedic clinic to be considered for an operation. An operation will depend on the underlying cause of the problem and may improve your symptoms.

Surgery should only be considered after all other treatments have been tried for **at least 3 months** without success. The recovery time after an operation 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. See our separate surgical leaflet (by clicking on the links on the website for Metatarsalgia surgery or Morton's neuroma surgery) for more details on procedures, recovery timescales, and possible complications of surgery.

Other information:

Shoes, gel padding, insoles etc:

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

Healthystep: <http://www.healthystep.co.uk/collections/metatarsalgia> Tel: 01457 839549

Algeos: <http://www.valleo.com/> Tel: 0151 280 5555

Simply Feet Tel: <http://www.simplyfeet.co.uk/index.php/footcare/gel-cushioning/ball-of-foot-cushioning.html> Tel: 0845 3700380

Health and Wellbeing Information:

NHS Inform: Tel: 0800 224488 <https://www.nhsinform.scot/injuries/muscle-bone-and-joint-injuries>

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