



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

## **Helping Hand™**

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

# **Sports Medicine: Morton's Neuroma**

Morton's neuroma is a nerve disorder in the foot. It causes pain and loss of feeling between 2 toes. It is caused by thickening of the tissue around the nerve (interdigital nerve) between the metatarsal bones of the foot, near the toes. It most often involves the space between the third and fourth toes.

## **Signs and Symptoms**

- Pain and tenderness in the forefoot, usually between the third and fourth toes
- Pain made worse by wearing tight or high-heeled shoes and pain is not as bad once shoes are removed
- Pain can feel like walking on stones
- Tingling, numbness, burning, or shocks in the forefoot

## **Increased Risk**

- Individuals born as female
- Having loose ligaments in the foot that cause the nerve to get thick
- Having other foot or ankle injuries
- Wearing high heels, tight shoes, or shoes with little padding

## **Treatment**

- Medicine
  - Anti-inflammatory medicines like ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) or naproxen (Aleve®), may be recommended. Take these as directed by your doctor or health care provider.
  - Other minor pain relievers like acetaminophen (Tylenol®).

- Use of cold and heat
  - Cold should be applied for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours **and** after any activity that makes symptoms worse. Use ice packs or an ice massage and raise the foot and ankle at or above heart level. This will help reduce swelling.
  - Heat may be used before doing stretching and strengthening activities prescribed by your doctor, health care provider, or athletic trainer. Use a heat pack or a warm soak. Apply for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Orthopedic aids
  - Wearing wider shoes or flat shoes along with arch support (orthotic) may help take pressure off the painful area.
  - A walking boot or cast may be needed for a short period to keep the foot from moving (immobilize) and reduce pain.
- Rehabilitation
  - Rehab with a physical therapist or athletic trainer may be prescribed to help strengthen muscles in the lower leg and foot.
- Injection
  - For cases that do not improve with rehab, a steroid shot (injection) to the area may help decrease inflammation and improve pain
- Surgery
  - In cases where other treatment may fail, surgery may be needed to remove a portion of the neuroma or release tissue around the nerve.

## How to Prevent

- Do correct warm-up and stretching before practice or competition.
- Wear proper footwear with good arch support.
- Maintain proper foot and ankle flexibility, muscular strength and endurance, and cardiovascular fitness.

## When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor, health care provider, or the Sports Medicine team at (614) 355-6000 if:

- Symptoms get worse or do not improve, despite treatment.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop.

To schedule an appointment with Sports Medicine, visit [NationwideChildrens.org/SportsMedicineScheduling](https://NationwideChildrens.org/SportsMedicineScheduling) or scan this code with your camera phone.

