



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

## **Helping Hand™**

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

# **Sports Medicine: Tarsal Coalition**

Tarsal coalition occurs when there is an abnormal connection between the bones in the back of the foot (tarsal bones). There may be no symptoms, but often some develop in the early teens or as a young adult.

### **Signs and Symptoms**

- Having several ankle sprains
- Pain in the hindfoot that gets worse with activity
- Rigid, flat foot
- Foot feels stiff

### **Increased Risk**

- Family history of tarsal coalition

### **Treatment**

- Medicine
  - Anti-inflammatory medicines like ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) or naproxen (Aleve®) may be recommended. Take these as directed by your health care provider.
  - You can also use 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 for swelling and after any activity that makes symptoms worse. Use ice packs or an ice massage.
  - Heat may be used before performing stretching and strengthening activities prescribed by your health care provider or athletic trainer. Use a heat pack or warm soak. Apply for 10 to 15 minutes.

- Rest
  - Changing activity that causes pain or resting may be necessary.
- Orthopedic aids
  - Sometimes, casting or bracing the foot and ankle may help reduce swelling and pain.
  - Arch supports (orthotics) may be used to help reduce pressure on the hindfoot.
- Rehabilitation
  - Rehab with a physical therapist or athletic trainer may be prescribed to help strengthen the muscles in the lower leg, ankle, and foot.
- Surgery
  - If other treatments are not successful, surgery may be needed to remove the bony bridge (coalition) or fuse the hindfoot to reduce motion in one or more of the joints.

## **When to Call the Doctor**

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

- Pain, swelling, or tenderness worsen, despite treatment.
- Numbness or coldness in the foot.
- Blue, gray, or dusky color appears in the toenails.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop.

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

