



Sports Medicine: Turf Toe

Turf toe is an injury to the capsule and ligaments of the joint at the base of the big (first) toe. Pain is usually worst on the bottom of the foot.

Signs and Symptoms

- Foot pain, stiffness, and limping
- Tenderness on the bottom of the foot at the base of the big toe
- Bruising and swelling of the big toe, especially on the bottom of the foot
- Pain with motion, trying to lift up the first toe, trying to stand on tiptoes, or pushing off (running, jumping)

Increased Risk

- Previous toe injuries
- Arthritis of the big toe
- Long first toe, flat feet, and other bony issues
- Shoes that are too flexible or tight at toe box
- Sports that require sudden, explosive run starts (track), crouching (football), jumping (basketball, volleyball), or playing on synthetic or artificial surfaces

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 the activity that caused the problem to occur or resting may be necessary.
 - Elevating the injured foot for the first 24 to 48 hours may help with swelling and pain.
- Orthopedic aids
 - Wearing stiff-soled shoes with a wide toe area may help reduce bending of the big toe.
 - Taping of the big toes can help and may allow for earlier return to sports activity.
 - In more severe injuries, immobilizing the foot in a boot for a few weeks may reduce pain and allow the toe to heal.
- Exercises
 - Gentle range-of-motion exercises of the big toe and strengthening exercises guided by a physical therapist or athletic trainer may be recommended.

How to Prevent

- Wear wide-toed, stiff, well-padded shoes that fit well.
- Maintain good foot and ankle conditioning, flexibility, muscle strength, and endurance.

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 in 2 weeks, despite treatment.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop.

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

