

## Morton's Neuroma

### Information for patients

#### What is Morton's Neuroma?

Morton's Neuroma is the swelling of nerve tissue in the ball of the foot, which can cause severe pain. It most commonly occurs between the third and fourth toes, but can be present in any web space.



Pain is commonly described as a sharp or dull pain in the ball of the foot (forefoot) when walking.

It can also feel like a burning or tingling sensation which can shoot into the toes and can sometimes feel like you are walking on a pebble or stone.

Pain occurs due to the enlarged nerve being compressed between the metatarsal bones in the foot.

#### What can cause it?

- Flat feet which have a tendency to roll inwards can cause irritation and compression of the nerve between the bones of the forefoot.
- Other conditions such as Bunions and Hammer Toes may also cause the bones in the feet to rub against a nerve.
- Poor footwear – shoes which are too narrow will compress the nerves in the forefoot. Shoes with a higher heel will place additional weight on the forefoot, further compressing the nerve. Slip on shoes, or shoes that are too big can cause the toes to claw up to keep the shoe on, this increases forefoot compression.
- Standing or walking on hard concrete surfaces for long periods or wearing shoes with thin hard soles can also cause nerve irritation

#### How is it treated?

##### Footwear

The main treatment for Morton's Neuroma is changing your footwear to something which has plenty of room at the forefoot (depth and width) around your toes. This gives your foot room to spread and relieves pressure on the nerve.

Preferably, wear a shoe that has a lace-up, Velcro, or buckle fastening for stability. You may find that a trainer style of shoe is most comfortable.

Look for a shoe with a thick cushioned sole rather than a thin hard one.

Avoid slip-on court shoes, flat ballet style shoes and especially avoid high heels.

### **Insoles**

Wearing a cushioned insole inside your shoe can help. If you have a pronating foot type (one that collapses inwards when you walk) you may need a more supportive insole. Try an 'anti-pronatory' insole.

### **Other**

A short course of anti-inflammatory tablets or anti-inflammatory cream that you rub into the painful area, can be very helpful in reducing swelling and pain. Using an ice pack can also help. Bend and flex the toes frequently and massage around the area that is tender. This can help to release the pressure on the nerve so it can settle down. Do plenty of stretching exercises for the Achilles tendon to relieve tightness in the lower leg and foot.

## **Can it be cured?**

The majority of patients can relieve the pain themselves in a short period of time by trying the treatments above and persevering with them.

If you have tried all of the above and the problem is still there after three months you may benefit from seeing a Podiatrist for some orthotics.

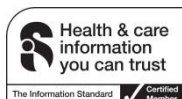
Some people may need to have a steroid injection (or a short course of injections) to help settle the inflammation around the nerve.

Surgery is a last resort treatment to remove the affected nerve, and is usually only needed in extreme cases.

### **Podiatry Services**

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