

# NEUROMA



## SYMPTOMS AND DIAGNOSIS

- Tingling between the third and fourth toes.
- Pain between the third and fourth toes.
- Cramping in the toes.
- Numbness in the toes or on the ball of the foot.
- Inflammation between the toes.
- Severe sharp or burning pain in the ball of the foot and at the base of the toes.
- Pain is increased when walking or otherwise applying pressure to the affected area.
- Symptoms usually exist only in one nerve on one foot as neuroma will mostly occur in isolation.

## CAUSES

- Morton's neuroma is caused by compression and irritation of the nerve between the third and fourth metatarsals.
- Trauma to the metatarsals can cause compression of the nerve.
- The specific causes of Morton's neuroma remain unknown, however it is thought that a narrow gap between metatarsals causes compression and irritation of the nerve leading to a thickening of the tissues around the nerve.

## RISK FACTORS

- **Sex:** women are more likely to suffer from neuroma than men.
- **Exercise:** patients who are athletic and regularly exercise are at increased risk due to regular and persistent constriction of the nerve.
- **Pathology:** patients with existing biomechanical deformities, such as pes cavus, pes planus, bunions or hammertoes, are at increased risk of neuroma.
- **Inappropriate footwear:** the wearing of high-heeled shoes has been shown to increase the likelihood of neuroma.

## TREATMENT

- Advise the patient to avoid restrictive footwear that will irritate the nerve and to instead wear shoes with a wide toe box that allows the toes space to move, thereby alleviating pressure on the nerve.
- Massage can help to alleviate pain.
- Patients with pre-existing foot complications such as flat feet, high arches, bunions or hammertoes, are likely to find their symptoms for neuroma increased by their pre-existing conditions that cause restriction around the nerve. Prescription orthotics can be effective in alleviating the added stress caused by these conditions and thereby eliminating the pain of the neuroma.
- Steroidal injections can be effective to alleviate pain and inflammation if standard pain medication is not effective.
- Studies have shown that ultrasound-guided injection of local anaesthetic to be an effective treatment to numb the pain in the nerve.
- In extreme cases, surgical removal of the thickened tissue around the nerve, or even removal of the nerve itself, will be necessary.

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