

FOOTNOTES 2003

N E W S Y O U C A N U S E

SPRING 2003

Don't Invite Heel Pain for a Visit this Spring

Most of us can't wait for the first warm days of spring to shed our heavy winter footwear and slip into a pair of sandals! But the combination of those few extra pounds you've put on during the "couch potato" months of winter, along with a pair of fashionable sandals, can bring on a painful bout of plantar fasciitis, or heel pain.


This painful condition results from inflammation of the connective tissue (the fascia) that stretches from the base of the toes, across the arch of the foot, to the point at which it inserts into the heel bone. Women in the over-40 age range are most susceptible to this problem, especially if they're overweight. Patients with plantar fasciitis will most often complain of pain upon awakening in the morning, causing hobbling or limping for a few minutes.

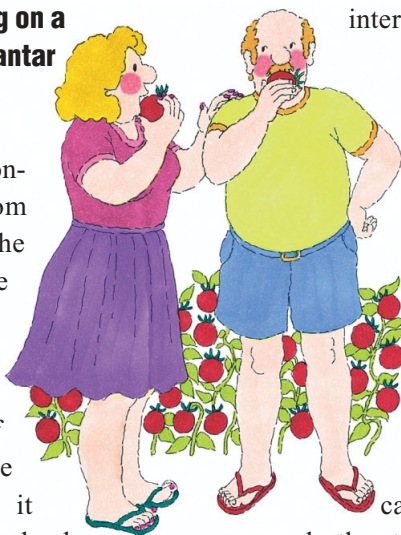
According to guidelines published by the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons, initial treatment of plantar fasciitis includes use of anti-inflammatory medications, padding

and strapping of the foot, and injections of corticosteroids. Patients also should stretch their calf muscles regularly, and avoid wearing flat, unsupportive shoes and walking barefoot. Most patients will see relief within six weeks of treatment. Unresponsive cases, however, may require surgical intervention.

If heel pain visits you this spring, and over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications and calf-stretching exercises aren't helping, please make an appointment with our office to have the condition evaluated.

Although plantar fasciitis is the primary cause of heel pain, it can also be

caused by stress fractures and other trauma, arthritis, or nerve and circulation problems that should not be ignored. 



Heel Pain Checklist


- ✓ Lose those extra pounds
- ✓ Wear supportive shoes
- ✓ Stretch calf muscles
- ✓ See your doctor if pain persists

"Bunionettes" Are a Big Pain

A foot condition known as **Tailor's Bunion**, and sometimes called a **bunionette**, can cause problems ranging from pain and inflammation to ulceration and infection. This condition, caused by an enlargement of the joint behind the little toe, occurs most often in women.

When the enlarged joint worsens due to arthritis, joint instability, or wearing of high heels or narrow-fitting shoes, patients can often obtain relief by wearing wider shoes or taking anti-inflammatory drugs. However, for those whose symptoms continue, a simple outpatient procedure can allow them to resume everyday activities without pain.

According to a study recently reported in the *Journal of Foot & Ankle Surgery*, surgical treatment for Tailor's Bunion has been shown to be 96% successful in correcting the deformity. A podiatric foot and ankle surgeon will select from several different procedures based upon the patient's foot type, activity level, and age, among other factors. The surgery is an outpatient procedure performed with a local anesthesia, and requires a short recuperative time in a surgical shoe.

Given the outstanding success of surgical treatment, there's no reason anyone should endure persistent pain from a tailor's bunion. 

Staying Active Keeps Seniors Healthy

According to the U.S. Government Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, by age 75 about one in three men and one in two women do not engage in any physical activity. Regular physical activity greatly reduces a person's risk from dying of heart disease, and decreases the risk for colon cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure. It also helps to control weight; contributes to healthy bones, muscles, and joints; helps to relieve the pain of arthritis; reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression; and can decrease the need for hospitalizations, physician visits, and medications.

A major factor inhibiting an older person's ability to stay active can be painful feet, making it difficult to do something as simple as taking an after-dinner stroll. One common foot

problem for seniors is crossover toe, in which the second toe gradually moves across the big toe. This painful condition makes it difficult to walk comfortably or pursue an active lifestyle.

Individuals with hammertoes, bunions or a second toe that is longer than the big toe are most susceptible to developing crossover toe as they age. The first symptom of crossover toe is pain in the ball of the foot caused by a tear in the underlying joint capsule, or plantar plate. The pre-existing problems, such as hammertoes, combined with normal wear and tear or possible trauma can cause the plate to tear over time. If the pain persists and the toe starts to cross over, surgery is recommended.

Surgery to correct crossover toe is an outpatient procedure performed with a local anesthesia. At the same time, bunions or hammertoes can be

corrected. Recovery time, which varies depending upon the general condition of the patient, averages six weeks.

Given the health risks from inactivity, it is advisable that senior citizens with foot pain seek treatment from a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon. Caretakers of older parents or relatives are advised to be observant of potential foot difficulties, so they can be treated at an early stage. Our office staff will be happy to schedule an appointment for assessment of foot pain in senior citizens. We want to help keep you and your family "on the go" for a long, healthy, and enjoyable life! 