

Orthopaedic Connection

Foot and Ankle Arthritis

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

You think you are doing pretty well health wise and all of a sudden you begin to have pain in your foot and/or ankle. There seems to be no apparent reason for it. You hope it will go away. It doesn't. You change shoes. It doesn't help.

If it flat out won't go away, you should have it checked. That includes a good exam and plain x-rays of the foot and ankle.

What Is It?

A common problem as people age is osteoarthritis or degenerative arthritis of the weight bearing joints. In the foot it seems to involve the big toe most often. This is different than a bunion which anyone can see. In the case of arthritis of the big toe (also called hallux rigidus) the toe may look straight.

Rheumatoid arthritis and post injury arthritis are also types of arthritis that can affect the foot and ankle.

Signs and Symptoms

Arthritis pain typically develops gradually and progresses over time as joints deteriorate. It may be worse in the morning when you get up.

Swelling may be present.

Pain and stiffness in the great toe can make it difficult to bend the toe upwards. It may hurt more when you push off to walk.

Swelling or a lump on top of your foot or toe can become red and irritated as it rubs on the shoe.

How I Treat It

If the diagnosis has been made by examination and x-rays, there are several ways to treat it.

- Advil, Motrin or similar for pain and inflammation
- Contrast - heat first then ice, 10 minutes each
- See a shoe professional to be sure you have the best shoe for you
- Possibly some extra cushioning or padding
- Orthotics maybe, but they won't fit in a lot of shoes you may have
- A steroid injection might help
- An ankle brace can be tried that I prescribe which you obtain from a brace professional
- Women, put away your high heels
- Physical therapy, maybe but not too often helpful

Personal

I have been through this myself and it is downright miserable to hurt with every step. The pain usually is controllable by a combination of things and the pain begins to ease off. It may take several weeks though.

Surgery

There are many options to try first before giving in to surgery, but in some cases you have no choice if you want to at least have a chance to stop hurting.

I didn't want this to be a discussion of foot surgery. If I am seeing you and I think you need it, I will explain thoroughly why you need it and what will be done.

My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.

Office Website and Gratiot County Herald Archive

What if there was a whole world of musculoskeletal information at one place? There is!

www.orthopodsurgeon.com opens up for you the office website, Your Orthopaedic Connection and the Archive of all previous GCH articles I have written for you, your family and friends.

Please check it out. Do yourself a favor.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush