

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Morton's Neuroma

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

What if I came in the exam room and told you, you had Morton's neuroma? You would probably think you had cancer and be very worried.

Well, you know I don't scare people with medical words they don't understand. I explain things first in your language. And it isn't cancer!

What Is It?

It is a painful condition of the foot that isn't a tumor at all. But the term neuroma sounds like that.

This condition of the foot was named for the surgeon who described it long ago. It is a thickening of the nerve at the base of the 3rd and 4th toes typically. The nerve gets caught and irritated between two metatarsal bones. Usually only one foot is affected.

Symptoms

It begins by feeling like there is a wrinkle in your sock. Or maybe like there is an object in your shoe you are stepping on.

Pain is present in the ball of the foot that radiates into the 3rd and 4th toes. Pain increases if shoes are slightly tight. It feels better to take the shoe off and massage the foot. You can't feel a lump. The 3rd and 4th toes often feel numb.

True Neuroma

To clarify, Morton's neuroma is not a true neuroma. It is an irritation, enlargement and thickening of a foot nerve caused by pressure.

Nerves in the hand, foot and elsewhere can develop true tumors that are overwhelmingly benign tumors. Benign neuroma tumors are not cancer. They don't spread, but they enlarge slowly and do cause problems.

Malignant tumors do sometimes occur in nerves.

How I Treat It

- Try wearing comfortable, cushioned, wide shoes for 4 weeks
- Lower heels are the best
- Wider shoes keep from pinching the bones together
- Pads or customized shoe inserts can lift and separate the bones
- Injection of a steroid is needed sometimes
- Surgery is helpful if nothing else works

What Else?

Stress fractures in the feet and arthritis can act like Morton's neuroma so I have to consider those conditions.

Office Website and Argus Orthopaedic Zone Archive

For much more musculoskeletal and Orthopaedic Surgery information check out the office website www.orthopodsurgeon.com, which also takes you to Your Orthopaedic Connection. It contains a huge amount of useful information.

In addition the website has the archive of every article I have written for you in Shepherd Argus. All the articles are listed from most recent back to the first one! Check it out for interesting articles you may have missed.

I appreciate you loyal readers and welcome all newcomers!

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush