

# Argus Orthopaedic Zone

## Ever Hear of the Sesamoid Bones?

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*Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

Sesamoid bones? Blank stare. I thought so.

Well, let's get started. There are two of them. They are kind of like tiny kneecaps and they are in the ball of the foot on the big toe side.

Like the kneecap they are embedded in a tendon. In this case the tendon is deep in your foot. The bones lie side by side and move back and forth on the surface of the first metatarsal bone.

At least now you know what they are and where (sort of!).

They are pretty small, but not as small as the tiny ones in the middle ear!

I'll bet most people live their lives not knowing they even have sesamoids!

If there is something wrong with the bones you will know, because you have to put pressure on these two little bones each step you take.

### Symptoms

- Pain in the ball of the foot on the big toe side
- Swelling may be present
- Pain increases when running or dancing

### Exam

Compared with other things I write about this is simple. The foot is tender directly beneath the first metatarsal head. The tender spot moves as the patient flexes and extends the great toe. Forced, upward movement of the great toe is likely to be painful.

### Diagnosis

X-rays. Several views of this part of the foot helps. It can get confusing though because 25% of us have a sesamoid bone develop in two parts. Sometimes I need to order a bone scan to diagnose a sesamoid fracture.

### What else?

Pain could be coming from arthritis of the great toe. Or you could have a small nerve tumor. Pain from metatarsalgia from another near by toe could also cause similar symptoms.

### Treatment

If a fracture of one or both sesamoids has occurred, a special stiff soled shoe or cast is needed.

After 4 weeks I use a well cushioned shoe with a special pad on the sole of the foot.

Avoid high heeled shoes as they cause much pressure.  
Surgery is rarely needed, but possible if nothing else helps.  
If pain is from inflammation and not fracture, I have injected the area with a corticosteroid on occasion.

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Dr. Haverbush