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Advertising Feature

METATARSALGIA

METATARSALGIA is pain in the ball of the foot. Estelle Mitchell, Chartered Physiotherapist, often has the symptom described to her as 'walking on pebbles' or as 'having a stone in my shoe'.

This pain can be vague. It can ache or, indeed, can be a horrible burning sensation.

In simple terms, metatarsalgia is pain caused by inflammation in the ball of the foot or at the juncture of the big toe or the other toes with the rest of the foot.

Metatarsalgia, like many foot-related problems, can be caused by a variety of issues. Specialists agree that high arches, deformities of the toes, stiff ankles, irritated nerves in the forefeet, bunions, corns, poor circulation to the feet (owing to diabetes) gout, arthritis, Morton's Neuroma, weight gain, and shoes with too-high heels or narrow toes are all factors.

The most common reason for metatarsalgia, however, is poor foot function, which, of course, is also the main contributing factor towards bunions, corns, toe problems, and Morton's Neuroma.

Estelle says: "You can be fairly confident that you have metatarsalgia if one or more of your joints between the toes and the main body of the foot becomes inflamed, painful and stiff."

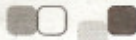
Swelling may be present and, if you have metatarsalgia, you will often experience a burning sensation in the joint area.

Generally, the swelling and pain become progressively worse with continued activity. In full-blown metatarsalgia, the pain can be so intense that putting weight


on the foot becomes nearly impossible.

"Diabetes causes poor blood circulation to the feet, which can lead to pain similar to the discomfort of metatarsalgia and gout leads to joint irritations which is again, similar to metatarsalgia."

So what can you do about metatarsalgia?

—  —

"Metatarsalgia is described as similar to having a stone in your shoe"

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Estelle advises: "There are a couple of home treatments that can be done to provide relief but here, as the problem is usually a biomechanical one, a more permanent solution needs to be found. The use of foot orthotics has been researched and tested by leading institutions around the world and is widely accepted in the medical community."

"Clinical studies and field research verify the value of orthotics in relieving forefoot pain and improving structural integri-

ty. Orthotics should always be computerised for accuracy and a prescription made and, in this case, designed to relieve metatarsalgia and featuring a metatarsal pad.

"The orthotic is constructed with the pad placed behind the ball of the foot to relieve pressure and redistribute weight from the painful area."

Other methods that can provide relief include:

- Wear proper, supportive and cushioned shoes with a wide toe box.
- Use ice to reduce the inflammation (a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp tea towel and applied for a maximum of 10 minutes at a time is great) and/or take anti-inflammatories.
- Weight loss may help but remember this will not correct the biomechanics.
- Reduce activity until inflammation subsides.

Remember, pain of any sort is not a necessity.

For an appointment with Estelle Mitchell, Biomechanical Specialist and your English Chartered Physiotherapist, call 952 883 151 or visit her websites at: www.thebodyworkscclinic.com www.marbellaphysio.com or www.physiofoot.com.



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