

Stretch Your Calf Muscles

This will reduce the pressures under the ball of your foot when walking. You should hold the stretch for 30 seconds, and repeat for each leg 5 times. You should try and carry out these stretches 2-3 times each day.

There are stretching videos you can watch on the Livewell Southwest youtube channel. at <https://bit.ly/3fCLlBQ> (videos 5 and 12).

Maintain a Healthy



Weight

Following a healthy balanced diet, and undertaking low-impact exercise, eg swimming or cycling, can help reduce weight if you are overweight, and in turn reduce the stresses that your feet are placed under.

Rest the Foot When Able

Sitting with your foot raised when able may also help reduce any inflammation in your foot.

Apply Ice

Applying an ice pack to the ball of the foot can help (if necessary use a bag of frozen peas instead), but wrap these in a towel first to avoid damaging the skin. Ice packs (or peas) can be applied for up to 20 minutes, every 2-3 hours.

Medication

If you are able, take paracetamol or ibuprofen to address the pain in your foot. However avoid ibuprofen in the first 48 hours after injury. Consult with a pharmacist if you are unsure of the best medication for you.

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Podiatry Services Patient Information Leaflet

Metatarsalgia (Pain in The Forefoot)



A Self Help Guide

We support people to lead independent, healthy lives

What is metatarsalgia?

Metatarsalgia is a non-specific, “catch-all” term that is used to describe pain in the forefoot, usually centred around the ball of the foot. It can be caused by a wide variety of conditions and factors, and can lead to a range of different symptoms.

Metatarsalgia may ease with rest, and get worse when you stand up, walk or exercise.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of metatarsalgia include:

- Pain in the big toe joint, or any of the smaller toe joints.
- Sharp, or burning, or shooting pain in the ball of the foot.
- Numbness, tingling, pins & needles in the toes.
- The sensation of having a stone in your shoe when walking.
- Increased pain with exercise, or when wearing certain shoes, especially thin soled shoes, tight-fitting footwear or high-heeled shoes.
- A dull ache within or underneath the ball of the foot.

What are the possible causes?

These may include, but are not limited to:

- **Footwear** - thin soles or high heels or flat heels can increase the pressure under the ball of the foot, tight shoes can squeeze the foot into an unnatural shape.
- **Certain sports/activities** can increase the pressure in the forefoot, for example high impact sports such as running, tennis, badminton.
- Your **foot shape** may contribute, for example if you have a high foot arch, reduced movement in your big toe joint, a long second toe, hammer/claw toes, or bunions.
- Being **overweight** causes your feet to bear more load during the day, which can lead to forefoot pain.
- **Joint and foot conditions**, such as Morton’s Neuroma, bursitis, gout, stress fracture, osteoarthritis, callus/corns can all result in forefoot pain.

What can I do to help myself?

Fortunately, there are a wide range of treatments that you can start, at home, to address your forefoot pain. These are outlined on the following pages, and would form part of any treatment plan from a health professional such as a podiatrist.

Metatarsalgia self-treatment

Wear Sensible Shoes

Wear shoes with a low heel (avoid flat), and a wide fit. Thick cushioning soles can also be helpful. Shoes that have a “forefoot rocker” shape can reduce pressure at the forefoot. Stiff soled shoes are helpful for some (soles that are more difficult to bend/twist)



It sometimes helps to draw around your feet on a piece of card and cut these out, then try and fit them in your shoes. If the card bends at the ends or sides, your shoe may be a poor fit to your foot shape.

Gel and Cushioning Insoles

Wearing cushioning, shock-absorbing insoles in your shoes can help with metatarsalgia. A good arch support will redistribute your weight more evenly through your feet.

You could also try metatarsal pads, which are widely available, to help cushion and reduce loads through the forefoot.

