

If Symptoms Persist

- **Podiatry assessment:** A podiatrist can assess your foot and provide custom orthoses (insoles) and advise on shoe modifications.
- **Steroid injection:** If the above measures fail, a steroid injection may reduce swelling around the nerve. However, this is usually not effective on its own unless footwear and stretching have been addressed first.
- **Surgery:** As a last resort, a referral to an orthopaedic specialist for possible surgical treatment may be considered.

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet, please contact Podiatry Services.

For more information about our services and how to manage common foot problems at home, please visit our website:

www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk/project/podiatry

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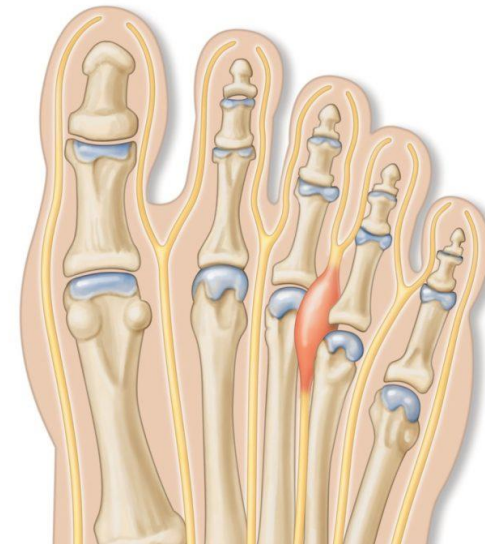
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Podiatry Services

Patient Information Leaflet

Morton's Neuroma & Intermetatarsal Bursitis

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What is this Condition?

This condition develops due to repeated friction or pressure on the intermetatarsal nerve or bursa located between the toes. Symptoms may include electric shock-like sensations, numbness, tingling, soreness, a bruised feeling, or a sensation of walking on a lump or pebble. It most commonly affects the 3rd and 4th toes but can involve any of the smaller toes.

Risk Factors for Developing the Problem

- **Footwear:** High heels increase pressure on the forefoot. Tight, narrow, or thin-soled shoes (including worn-out footwear) can compress the nerve or bursa. Even tight hosiery can contribute.
- **Foot structure:** Conditions like bunions, or naturally wide feet, especially when combined with poorly fitting footwear, can squeeze the forefoot bones together and irritate the nerve or bursa.
- **Repetitive trauma:** Activities such as running, kicking, or sports involving frequent direction changes (e.g. racket sports, football) can increase risk.
- **Higher body weight:** This can increase forefoot pressure.
- **Tight or weak calf muscles:** These can shift pressure forward when walking or running.

Treatment

Neuromas and intermetatarsal bursitis are treated using the same methods.

- **Properly fitting footwear alone often resolves the condition.**
- Ensure shoes are not too tight or narrow. You can check by tracing your foot onto cardboard (e.g., from a cereal box), cutting it out and placing it into your shoe. If it crumples, the shoe is too tight.
- Alternatively, remove the insole from your shoe and stand on it—if your toes or forefoot hang over the edge, the shoe is too narrow.
- Avoid high heels and thin-soled or worn shoes.
- Soft leather shoes can often be professionally stretched at the forefoot.
- Loosening laces or skipping lower eyelets may help the shoe accommodate your foot better.
- Stretching the calf muscles at the back of your legs can help to reduce pressures at the forefoot.
- Footwear with thick cushioned soles with a moderate-high heel drop (8-12mm) can help to reduce forefoot pressure. Shoes that have a “**rocker sole**” shape can further reduce pressure at the forefoot.
- Barefoot shoes: Many barefoot shoes feature a wide toe box, allowing the toes to splay naturally and reducing compression on the nerve.
- Over-the-counter insoles: Look for insoles with built-in metatarsal pads to relieve forefoot pressure.