Interdigital neuroma

This leaflet explains more about interdigital neuroma. If you have any further questions, please speak to the podiatrist caring for you.

What is a neuroma and why do I have it?
A neuroma is a thickening on the nerves in between your toes which occurs due to compression or repeated irritation of the nerve. Sometimes this occurs due to joints and soft tissues altering shape and compressing the nerve. Over time the body responds to this irritation by thickening the nerve to protect itself until it forms a lump, called a neuroma. Unfortunately, the neuroma causes further pressure between the toes and can be very painful.

What are the signs and symptoms?
Usually, a neuroma will cause burning or sharp pain in the toes that worsens with the pressure of tight shoes. Sometimes it may feel like you are walking on pebbles or you have something stuck in your shoe, and sometimes it can cause numbness in the toes.

Do I need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?
Interdigital neuroma is usually diagnosed clinically. The podiatrist will take a thorough medical and social history and will examine you. Often the area between the toes will be painful to touch and when your foot is compressed there will be a sharp pain. Sometimes when compressed between the bones the nerve will cause a noticeable click, called a Mulder’s click.

In some cases the podiatrist will refer for imaging (X-ray) such as ultrasound scans to confirm the diagnosis, particularly if they are considering corticosteroid injection or surgery.

What treatments are available?
Changing your footwear to well-fitting shoes with a wide toe box, a rocker forefoot and a fastening can be enough to relieve the symptoms of a neuroma. You will find more information in our leaflet called Choosing shoes. Sometimes a cushioned insole or a specially designed orthoses (insole) incorporating a bump underneath the metatarsals (bones) will be used to relieve pressure on the neuroma. For more information see our leaflet called Foot orthoses (insoles).

If a neuroma does not get better following footwear changes and insoles, we may consider a steroid or local anaesthetic injection to relieve symptoms (see our leaflet Foot and ankle corticosteroid injections).

Sometimes, for very large or stubborn neuroma, surgery is needed to remove it. In this case we will refer on to colleagues in orthopaedics or podiatric surgery for a consultation.
**What happens if I do not receive treatment?**

While a neuroma is unlikely to cause you ill health, they can be painful and limit your activity and quality of life. Usually, it is best to have it treated so that you can resume normal activity as soon as possible.

**Is there anything I can do to help myself?**

**Calf stretches:** Calf stretches can be very useful in reducing the pressure on the front of your foot where the neuroma occurs. This can help to reduce the pain. See leaflet called **Planter heel pain** which includes information on calf stretches.

**Lifestyle changes:** If you are overweight, losing weight will help as it will reduce the amount of load going through the foot as you walk. If you think you need more help with weight loss, please discuss this with your podiatrist or GP.

**Exercise and physical activity:** While the foot is painful you should temporarily reduce weight bearing activities such as running and strenuous walking. It is, however important that you remain physically active. Activities such as swimming, cycling and rowing can be useful to stay active until your foot pain improves. It is important that as the pain improves, you gradually increase running or walking to prevent the pain reoccurring.

**Useful sources of information**

Arthritis Research UK/Versus Arthritis:  

The College of Podiatry: [www.cop.org.uk/](http://www.cop.org.uk/)
Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)
Tel: 020 3049 7900

For emergencies outside these hours contact your local Emergency Department (A&E)

For more information on our service including clinic locations please visit:
www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/our-services/community-podiatry

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline
If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. t: 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Your comments and concerns
For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.
t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services
If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. t: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111
Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. t: 111

NHS website
Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust
Members of Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.
t: 0800 731 0319 e: members@gstt.nhs.uk w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

Was this leaflet useful?
We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets, or e: patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk

Leaflet number: 4693/VER1
Date published: February 2019
Review date: February 2022
© 2019 Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust
A list of sources is available on request

Our values: Put patients first | Take pride in what we do | Respect others | Strive to be the best | Act with integrity