

## **MORTON'S NEUROMA / NERVE ENTRAPMENT**

A neuroma occurs most commonly between the third and fourth toes and is caused by an entrapment (pinching) of the nerve between the metatarsals (folds just before the toes). This pinching causes inflammation around the nerve. As this irritation continues the nerve gets larger causing sharp pain, cramping, and burning. The symptoms may move into the web space or toward the tips of the toes. Pain is often radiating. Shoes that are too tight aggravate the condition. The condition is often related to imbalance in walking. This condition often needs surgical removal for elimination of pain.

I generally use three types of management before considering surgery. These are: change in footwear when possible, padding and strapping, and injection therapy. If the conservative approach of padding and strapping proves to be successful, I usually advise orthotics (inserts for your shoes).

If none of these conservative methods satisfactorily relieve pain, a surgical management approach is indicated. An incision is made over the affected area, the enlargement of the nerve is located, and a portion of the nerve is removed. This procedure is performed outpatient at the hospital or outpatient surgery center.

Post-operatively, your foot has sterile dressing on it for a couple weeks to protect the surgical wound and sutures, which are pulled at the end of this period. There is generally pain the first two days after this procedure, which can be controlled with medication. It is most important that you stay off your feet during this initial two-day period to keep swelling to a minimum.

Most of the time you will have numbness between the affected toes as a result of this surgery. This numbness most often dissipates after a period of time, but may linger. This numbness is generally preferable to the pain associated with Morton's neuroma. You are kept in a post-operative surgical shoe or a cutout shoe to allow the bandages to stay on for that two-week period. The sharp, severe pain is relieved almost immediately after surgery. On some occasions, neuromas may return, but this is the exception rather than the rule. Other complications include infection, as with any surgery. There is also a chance of a stump neuroma forming (this is when the neuroma is gone but the cut branch of the nerve scars up excessively and gives neuroma like symptoms).

There may be additional methods of treatment for this common foot problem, which I may discuss with you.

Neuromas can occur in many other areas beside between the third and fourth toes. Nerve entrapment, in general, is similar to the neuroma discussed here.