

Foot Notes

SPRING 2011

HEALTHY FEET FOR AN ACTIVE LIFE

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Travel Tips to Help Prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis

The travel season has begun, time to pack your bags and head off to your favorite destination. But while you're riding in the car or



travelling by plane, remember to stretch those legs to help prevent a serious condition known as Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT).

DVT is a condition in which a blood clot (a blockage) forms in vein located deep within the leg. These clots most commonly occur in the veins of the leg, but can also develop in other parts of the body. If the clot breaks loose and travels through the bloodstream, it can lodge in the lung. This blockage in the lung, called a

pulmonary embolism, can make it difficult to breathe and may even cause death.

Some people are more at risk than others for developing DVT. Risk factors include varicose veins, blood clotting disorders, pregnancy or recent childbirth, obesity, tobacco use, and heart disease. People over 40 years old, those who have had recent surgery, or those who are immobile through inactivity or wearing a cast are also more at risk for DVT.

People with DVT in the leg may have either no warning signs or their symptoms can be very vague. If any of the following warning signs or symptoms are present, it is important to make an appointment with our office for an evaluation:

- ▶ Swelling in the leg
- ▶ Pain in the calf or thigh
- ▶ Warmth and redness of the leg

If you are at risk for DVT and plan on taking a long trip this season, follow these tips to reduce the likelihood of developing a blood clot:

- ▶ Exercise legs every two to three hours to get the blood flowing back to the heart. Walk up and down the aisle of a plane or train, rotate ankles while sitting, and take regular breaks on road trips.
- ▶ Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids; avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- ▶ Consider wearing compression stockings.

Spring into Sports without Spraining Your Ankle

As the weather warms across the county, we tend to head outside and get active with our favorite activity. But don't let the arrival of springtime sports be the arrival of an ankle sprain.

An ankle sprain is an injury to one or more ligaments, usually on the outside of the ankle. Ligaments are bands of tissue – like rubber bands – that connect one bone to another and bind the joints together. The severity of an ankle sprain depends on whether the ligament is stretched, partially torn, or completely torn.

Ankle sprains are one of the most common injuries in athletes. Sports that involve quick, sudden movements, such as basketball, tennis, and soccer can trigger these injuries.

If you injure your ankle, don't think it's "just an ankle sprain" and hope it will heal on its own. Any ankle sprain requires prompt medical attention and diagnosis. Left untreated, an ankle sprain can lead to chronic ankle instability. In some cases, an injury may appear to be an ankle sprain when in actuality it is a more severe injury, such as a fracture. A general rule of thumb is to use "R.I.C.E." therapy for an ankle sprain – Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation – to help reduce swelling, pain, and further injury. It's also important to follow up with our office to assure there hasn't been a more serious injury that could lead to greater problems down the road if left untreated.

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Help prevent ankle sprains this spring with these tips:

- ▶ Perform exercises that help improve balance, lower leg strength and flexibility.
- ▶ Use warm-up stretches and exercises before playing sports.
- ▶ Use an ankle brace if you're recovering from an injury or have repeatedly sprained your ankle.
- ▶ Wear the right shoes for the sport. For example, support your ankle by wearing court shoes, not running shoes, when playing sports that involve side-to-side movement, such as tennis and basketball.

Don't Ignore Big Toe Pain

The joint at the base of your big toe takes a beating each day. It has to bend with each step you take, gets jammed when you make quick stops or twisting motions, and deals with added stress when placed in high-heeled shoes.

While occasional pain in the big toe may occur from the daily grind, constant pain in your big toe joint could be a warning sign of a progressive, arthritic condition known as "hallux rigidus." "Hallux" refers to the big toe, while "rigidus" indicates the toe is rigid and cannot move. In early states, when movement is only somewhat restricted, it is sometimes called "hallus limitus." This joint stiffness gets worse over time, making it difficult for you to walk, stoop or stand for long periods of time.

Hallux rigidus may run in the family but can also be caused by repetitive stress from workplace or sports activities. Tradesmen who crouch and stoop a lot and avid golfers and tennis players are more prone to getting hallux rigidus. An injury, such as a severe stubbing of the big toe, can also be a culprit for the condition.

It's best to have your toe examined when you first notice pain while walking, standing, squatting or bending over. If recognized and addressed early, this condition can be improved with conservative treatment such as shoe modifications, orthotic devices, medications, injection therapy, and physical therapy. But when the disease progresses and conservative attempts fail, surgery may be required to repair the damage from this painful condition.

If you're suffering from toe pain, give our office a call for an examination.



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