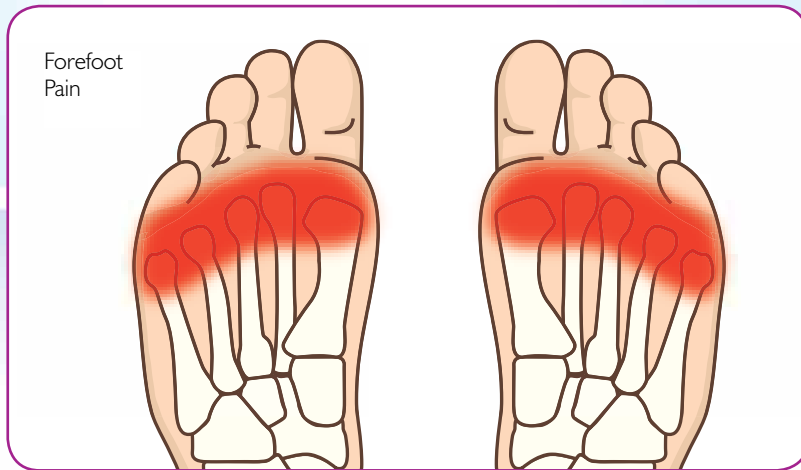


# METATARSALGIA



## WHAT IS IT?

Your metatarsal bones are the long bones in the front of your foot before you get to the toes. The term 'metatarsalgia' simply means pain in this area. It is usually felt under the heads of the metatarsals where they join to the toe bones. There are many causes of pain in this area including age related changes, wearing high heeled or tight shoes, being overweight, overuse of the feet

(in runners and athletes), a stiff achilles tendon, a high arched foot type, bunions, arthritis, gout, stress fractures, Morton's neuroma and nerve damage often associated with diabetes. The pain associated with 'metatarsalgia' is varied depending on the problem. You might feel a dull ache, it may be a sharp pain or some patients complain of a feeling similar to having stones in their shoes.

## DIAGNOSIS

As there are many options for the cause of 'metatarsalgia', your podiatrist will ask many questions regarding the history of the pain and your daily activities to try to build a picture that will allow a diagnosis. An xray might be necessary if they

feel that your problem could be a stress fracture otherwise you may require an MRI or ultrasound scan if they feel it is a soft tissue problem. If your podiatrist or doctor thinks the cause of your pain is arthritis or gout, you might need a blood test.

## TREATMENT OPTIONS

The treatment of your metatarsalgia will depend on the problem. Sensible low heeled footwear, foot pads and orthotics, painkillers (paracetamol and ibuprofen), elevating your feet during rest and physiotherapy exercises will all be useful treatments for most causes of metatarsalgia.

If you are overweight, then losing weight will help greatly as it will reduce the load going through your feet. Other, more specific treatments might be needed depending on the particular source of your pain. If you have gout or arthritis then medication is required to reduce the 'flare ups' associated with

this. If the pain is related to diabetes, then good control of your blood sugars, blood pressure and cholesterol levels will help to maintain good foot health. If the problem is due to overuse or is a stress fracture, you should change your daily activities if possible i.e. if you run a lot, try to cycle or swim instead until the pain has subsided.

Your podiatrist will also offer specific footwear advice as this will greatly help to make sure your foot is in the best, most supported position possible to help reduce your symptoms.



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