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April 2018

Volume 9

Issue 4

NorthPointe News



ACHILLES TENDONITIS



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FOOT HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH APRIL

Your feet are the foundation of your body and it is important to keep them healthy. Too often foot issues are left unattended for long periods of time, causing the development of other problems throughout your body. Healthy feet lead to a better quality of life. We also know that early discovery of problems in your feet may help detect the onset of other life-threatening diseases including diabetes and heart disease.

Not all changes to our feet are due to a health issue. As we age, normal changes to our feet take place. As these physical changes occur, shoe sizes and support needs also change and should be addressed.

20 MINUTES TO STAY ACTIVE

Yearly examinations with your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle podiatrist are important. Your podiatrist will track changes, check for proper sensation and circulation, and call attention to abnormalities. Problems and changes can be addressed. Early detection and treatment of issues help keep you on your feet and active.

Two common disorders that occur in the heel cord are Achilles tendonitis and Achilles tendonosis.

Achilles tendonitis is an inflammation of the Achilles tendon. This inflammation is typically short-lived. Over time, if not resolved, the condition may progress to a degeneration of the tendon (Achilles tendonosis), in which the tendon loses its organized structure and is likely to develop microscopic tears. Sometimes the degeneration involves the site where the Achilles tendon attaches to the heel bone. In rare cases, chronic degeneration, with or without pain, may result in rupture of the tendon.

Achilles tendonitis and tendonosis are usually caused by a sudden increase of a repetitive activity involving the Achilles tendon. Such activity puts too much stress on the tendon too quickly, leading to micro-injury of the tendon fibers. Due to this ongoing stress on the tendon, the body is unable to repair the injured tissue. The structure of the tendon is then altered, resulting in continued pain.

Athletes are at high risk for developing disorders of the Achilles tendon. Achilles tendonitis and tendonosis are also common in individuals whose work puts stress on their ankles and feet, such as laborers, as well as in "weekend warriors"—those who are less conditioned and participate in athletics only on weekends or infrequently.

In addition, people with excessive pronation (flattening of the arch) have a tendency to develop Achilles tendonitis and tendonosis due to the greater demands placed on the tendon when walking.

The symptoms associated with Achilles tendonitis and tendonosis include:

- Pain—aching, stiffness, soreness, or tenderness—within the tendon. Often pain appears upon arising in the morning or after periods of rest, then improves somewhat with motion but later worsens with increased activity.

- Tenderness, or sometimes intense pain, when the sides of the tendon are squeezed. There is less tenderness, however, when pressing directly on the back of the tendon.



When the disorder progresses to degeneration, the tendon may become enlarged and may develop nodules in the area where the tissue is damaged.

Treatment

Treatment approaches for Achilles tendonitis or tendonosis are selected on the basis of how long the injury has been present and the degree of damage to the tendon. In the early stage, when there is sudden inflammation, one or more of the following options may be recommended:

- **Immobilization.** Immobilization may involve the use of a cast or removable walking boot to reduce forces through the Achilles tendon and promote healing.
- **Ice.** To reduce swelling due to inflammation, apply a bag of ice over a thin towel to the affected area for 20 minutes of each waking hour. Do not put ice directly against the skin.
- **Oral medications.** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen, may be helpful in reducing the pain and inflammation in the early stage of the condition.
- **Orthotics.** For those with over-pronation or gait abnormalities, custom orthotic devices may be prescribed.
- **Night splints.** Night splints help to maintain a stretch in the Achilles tendon during sleep.
- **Physical therapy.** Physical therapy may include strengthening exercises, soft-tissue massage/mobilization, gait and running re-education, stretching, and ultrasound therapy.

If non-surgical approaches fail to restore the tendon to its normal condition, surgery may be necessary. The foot and ankle surgeon will select the best procedure to repair the tendon, based upon the extent of the injury, the patient's age and activity level, and other factors.

Get Ready to Walk!

Now that Spring has sprung— treat yourself to a daily walk. A little stretching and the use of proper shoes will you keep you walking comfortably!

Wearing walking shoes that are comfortable and fit your feet can help prevent injuries such as blisters and calluses. A walking shoe should also be fairly lightweight and provide good shock absorption.

Make sure to consider the shape of your feet when selecting a shoe. Your shoes should conform to the shape of your foot. Never force your foot to conform to a pair of shoes.

Shoes that are too narrow or too wide can lead to painful blisters and calluses. In addition, a toe box that's not high enough — and doesn't provide enough room for your toes — can aggravate foot disorders such as bunions and hammertoes.

Choose walking shoes that accommodate your arch type. Generally speaking, your feet fall into one of three categories:

Neutral-arched feet. Your feet aren't overly arched nor are they overly flat. Look for shoes with firm mid-soles, straight to semi curved lasts — last refers to the shape of the sole and the footprint around which the shoe is built — and moderate rear-foot stability.

Low-arched or flat feet. Low arches or flat feet may contribute to muscle stress and joint problems in some individuals. If you have significantly flat feet, look for a walking shoe with a straight last and motion control to help stabilize your feet.

High-arched feet. High arches may contribute to excessive strain on joints and muscles, as your feet may not absorb shock as well. Look for cushioning to compensate for your lack of natural shock absorption. A curved last also may help in some cases.

NorthPointe Foot & Ankle podiatrists can help you determine the proper shoe and proper warm-up techniques for you. Bring your walking shoes with you to your next exam.



Prepare Your Feet for Sandals

Do you have discolored toenails? If so, this is the time to visit your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle podiatrist to find out if there is a treatment that can help you **before the summer sandal wearing season** begins.

Discolored toenails might be an indication of a serious underlying condition, such as diabetes or a liver dysfunction, but the discoloration may be the result of a simpler issue, such as ground-in dirt. Bleeding under the nail can cause blackening, but most often, a discolored nail is the result of a fungal infection.

Many common fungi are able to infect the nail and can turn it yellow, brown, reddish, green or black, depending on the variety of fungus involved. In the earliest phase, this infection might present itself as a yellowish tint or a small white spot on the nail. As the fungus grows and matures, the discoloration will usually become more pronounced.

In the advanced stages, the toenails are likely to thicken, and they might also become flaky or misshapen. From this stage, the fungal infection is likely to spread to the surrounding skin, and treatment becomes more challenging.

If you have discolored toenails find out what the cause is and your treatment options. NorthPointe Foot & Ankle offers a variety of products and treatments to resolve nail issues.

Welcome Spring

10 Easy Ways to Keep Your Feet Healthy

Inspect your feet daily – Look for any changes in the general appearance of the foot

Practice good foot hygiene - Wash your feet well, and dry them thoroughly afterwards.

Moisturize your feet - It is important to hydrate the skin in your feet to replenish all the lost moisture.

Wear appropriate footwear – Make sure to purchase the right size of footwear and buy appropriate shoes for your activities.

Trim your toenails – Don't create deep curves at the edges and trim to just above the skin.

Change shoes often - Your feet have a lot of sweat glands, and wearing shoes will only absorb the moisture released from these glands.

Exercise regularly – Exercising is good for your feet.

Do not walk barefoot - Even when at home, always wear the appropriate footwear.

Apply sunscreen - Applying sunscreen with a considerable amount of SPF will help prevent painful sunburns.

See your NorthPointe podiatrist yearly- If you notice or feel anything unusual in your feet, do not hesitate to see your podiatrist immediately.



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