

NorthPointe Foot & Ankle  
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# NorthPointe News



## PEDIATRIC HEEL PAIN



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### MEET THE TEAM Erin Carter

NorthPointe Foot & Ankle is pleased to welcome Erin Carter to the team as a medical assistant.

Erin attended Ross Medical Education Center and worked at a local primary care facility prior to joining our team.



As a medical assistant, Erin performs a variety of clinical and clerical actions to

expedite <sup>patient</sup> flow and activities of the office. She will meet you in the exam room to make sure you are comfortable and gather basic information.

Once your exam is complete, she will follow the directions that the doctor has given to complete your care.

When not in the office, Erin spends time with her 2-year old daughter Alaya. She also enjoys time with her twin sister Erica, shopping, and getting her hair done.

Receive our monthly newsletter.  
Send your email address to:  
Doctors@NorthPointeFoot.com

Heel pain is a common childhood complaint. That doesn't mean, however, that it should be ignored, or that parents should wait to see if it will "go away." Heel pain is a symptom, not a disease. In other words, heel pain is a warning sign that a child has a condition that deserves attention. Heel pain problems in children are often associated with these signs and symptoms:

- Pain in the back or bottom of the heel
- Limping
- Walking on toes
- Difficulty participating in usual activities or sports.



The most common cause of pediatric heel pain is a disorder called calcaneal apophysitis which usually affects 8 to 14 year-olds. However, pediatric heel pain may be the sign of many other problems, and can occur at younger or older ages.

Conditions that cause pediatric heel pain include:

- **Calcaneal apophysitis.** Also known as Sever's disease, this is the most common. It is an inflammation of the heel's growth plate due to muscle strain and repetitive stress, especially in those who are active or obese. This condition usually causes pain and tenderness in the back and bottom of the heel when walking, and the heel is painful when touched.
- **Tendo-Achilles bursitis.** This condition is an inflammation of the fluid-filled sac (bursa) located between the Achilles tendon and the heel bone. This can result from injuries to the heel, certain diseases (such as juvenile rheumatoid arthritis), or wearing poorly cushioned shoes.
- **Overuse syndromes.** Because the heel's growth plate is sensitive to repeated running and pounding on hard surfaces, pediatric heel pain often reflects overuse. Children involved in soccer, track, or basketball are especially vulnerable. Two common overuse syndromes are Achilles tendonitis and plantar fasciitis.

• **Fractures.** Sometimes heel pain is caused by a break in the bone. *Stress fractures* - hairline breaks resulting from repeated stress on the bone - often occur in adolescents engaged in athletics, especially when the intensity of training suddenly changes. Another type of break - *acute fractures* - can result from simply jumping 2 or 3 feet from a couch or stairway.

### Treatment Options

The treatment selected depends upon the diagnosis and the severity of the pain. For mild heel pain, treatment options include:

• **Reduce activity.** The child needs to reduce or stop any activity that causes pain.

• **Cushion the heel.** Temporary shoe inserts are useful in softening the impact on the heel when walking, running, and standing.

For moderate heel pain, in addition to reducing activity and cushioning the heel, your NorthPointe surgeon may use one or more of these treatment options:

• **Medications.** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, help reduce pain and inflammation.

• **Physical therapy.** Stretching or physical therapy modalities are sometimes used to promote healing of the inflamed tissue.

• **Orthotic devices.** Custom orthotic devices help support the foot properly.

For severe heel pain, more aggressive treatment options may be necessary, including:

• **Immobilization.** Some patients need to use crutches to avoid all weight-bearing on the affected foot. In severe cases of heel pain, the child may be placed in a cast to promote healing while keeping the foot and ankle totally immobile.

• **Follow-up measures.** After immobilization or casting, follow-up care often includes use of custom orthotic devices, physical therapy, or strapping.

• **Surgery.** There are some instances when surgery may be required to lengthen the tendon or correct other problems.

# Back to School Shoe Shopping

During the back-to-school time frame and throughout the year, one of the most important purchases on any parent's shopping list should be a pair of proper fitting shoes for their child. The doctors of NorthPointe Foot & Ankle would like to share several important factors that parents should consider while shopping:

- **Children's Feet Change with Age.** Shoe and sock sizes may change every few months as a child's feet grow.
- **Shoes That Don't Fit Properly Can Aggravate the Feet.** Always measure the child's feet before buying shoes, and watch for signs of irritation.
- **Never Hand Down Footwear.** Just because a shoe size fits one child comfortably doesn't mean it will fit another the same way. Also, sharing shoes can spread fungi like athlete's foot and nail fungus.
- **Examine the Heels.** Children may wear through the heels of their shoes quicker than outgrowing shoes themselves. Uneven heel wear can indicate a foot problem that should be checked by a podiatrist.
- **Take Your Child Shoe Shopping.** Every shoe fits differently. Letting a child have a say in the shoe buying process promotes healthy foot habits down the road.
- **Always Buy for the Larger Foot.** Feet are seldom precisely the same size.
- **Buy Shoes That Do Not Need a "Break-In" Period.** Shoes should be comfortable immediately. Also make sure to have your child try on shoes with socks or tights, if that's how they'll be worn.
- **Consider Closed Toe Shoes.** Covering the child's toes allows for more protection.

**1** **LOOK FOR A STIFF HEEL**  
 Press on both sides of the heel counter. It shouldn't collapse.

**2** **CHECK TOE FLEXIBILITY**  
 The shoe should bend with your child's toes. It shouldn't be too stiff or bend too much in the toe box area.

**3** **SELECT A SHOE WITH A RIGID MIDDLE**  
 Does your shoe twist? Your shoe should never twist in the middle.

## Additional Shoe Advice for Parents

- Foot problems noticed at birth will not disappear by themselves. Do not wait until a child gets older to fix a problem! Foot problems in youth can lead to greater problems down the road.
- If there are concerns about the way a child is walking, get him/her checked by a podiatrist. A lack of complaint by a youngster is not a reliable sign that there is no problem.
- Going barefoot is a healthy activity for children under the right conditions. However, walking barefoot on dirty pavement can expose children's feet to the dangers of infection through accidental cuts and to severe contusions, sprains or fractures.
- Children's sports-related injuries are on the rise. A child's visit to a podiatrist can help determine any concerns there may be regarding the child participating in specific sports and help identify the activities that may be best suited for the individual child. Protective taping of the ankles may be recommended to help prevent sprains and fractures.



## You're Invited!

### NorthPointe's Pre-Dream Cruise Picnic for Our Patients

Join us for the NorthPointe Foot & Ankle annual Pre Dream Cruise Party! Enjoy National Coney Island hot dogs and classic car watching on Woodward Avenue.



**Date: Thursday, August 17, 5 - 8 p.m.**

**RSVP: (248) 545-0100 by August 11**      **Space is limited**

Reservations are limited and will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

Although there is no fee to participate, monetary donations to support the **Berkley/Huntington Woods Youth Assistance** program will be accepted and appreciated.

Berkley/Huntington Woods Youth Assistance is a non-profit organization in Berkley that provides confidential, short-term family-centered counseling and referral services for young people. To find out more about BHWYA visit their website: [www.BHWYA.org](http://www.BHWYA.org).

