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MEET OUR TEAM

Erika Vitalez

Erika Vitalez is a medical assistant on our NorthPointe Foot & Ankle team. Erika began working part-time at this office in August and also works at Dr. Hoffman's West Bloomfield office. She comes to us after living and working in California.

The primary role of a medical assistant is to perform a variety of clinical and clerical activities to expedite patient flow and activities of the office.



At our office, Erika meets you in the exam room. She checks to make sure you are comfortable and gathers basic information.

Once examined by the doctor, Erika follows any directions that he may give to complete your care.

NorthPointe News



VOLUME 6, ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2015

Ball of the Foot Pain

Metatarsalgia is a condition of the feet that affects the ball of the foot; impacting both bone and joint. The metatarsals are the lengthy bones that go from the toes to the mid-foot. While the name may sound strange, this foot condition is very common. Most people experience pain near the heads of these bones. Some may notice discomfort around the big toe while others endure pain that impacts that area by toes two, three, and four. Common symptoms include pain and burning in the ball of the foot, worsening discomfort when pressure is placed on the area, pain or tingling in the toes, and sometimes loss of feeling. You may notice that the pain becomes worse if you flex your feet.

Causes

Improper shoe gear is the primary cause of painful inflammation in this area. For instance, high-heeled shoes force pressure on the forefoot. This is compounded if there isn't enough toe space due to the style or size. Purchase shoes that fit well, provide plenty of wiggle room in the toe box, and have a heel that is less than two inches. If you're holding onto your old favorites, it's time to let them go. Worn out shoes are often a problem, especially for runners.

Aging affects the entire body, and the feet are no exception. While many people complain of gaining weight as they get older, fat in the feet actually diminishes. This is problematic since the extra cushioning provided by this padding protects against some conditions such as metatarsalgia.

Some physical activities put excess stress on the metatarsal regions of the feet. Running is just one example of a common exercise that can exacerbate this painful condition. If you participate in high-impact workouts, monitor your feet closely.

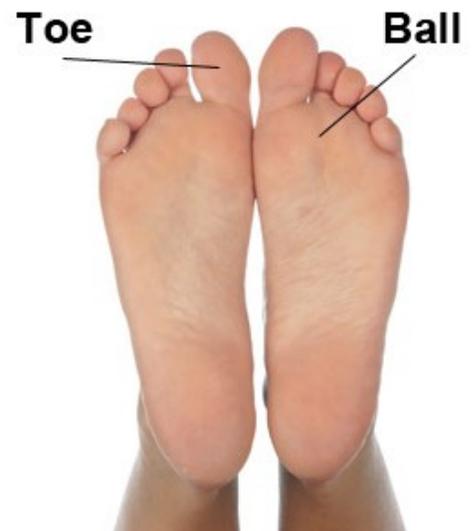
The structure and condition of an individual's feet plays a role in this condition as well. A bunion, or other common deformities, can change the way that weight is distributed across the feet. If your

arches are high, gait and weight distribution is also affected.

Treatment

Once a diagnosis is made, your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle podiatrist will explain the best treatment options for your case. Their recommendations will be based on the cause of your pain, so imaging tools may be used to ensure that there is not a fracture present.

Invasive measures are not usually necessary. Instead, conservative treatments such as rest, changes in footwear, icing, anti-inflammatory medications, custom orthotics,



and padding may be recommended. It is important to seek treatment at the onset of pain in order to get the most benefits from these methods. Orthotics can redirect pressure from the ball of the foot which will aid in recovery.

If you are active, taking a break from your normal routine may be suggested. This doesn't mean that exercise must be eliminated. Instead, switch to a low-impact activity, such as swimming, while you are recovering.

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Doctors@NorthPointeFoot.com



Check Your Balance

Balance in all aspects of life is important. We often talk about balancing our work with our home life - making time for fun, and family matters. However, mental equilibrium isn't the only kind of balance that's important in life. Good physical balance can help older people avoid the debilitating and potentially life-threatening complications of a fall.

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries among older people, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In 2010, 2.3 million fall injuries sent older folks to emergency rooms; 662,000 required hospitalizations; and falls cost \$30 billion in direct medical costs, the CDC says.

Improving balance can help reduce the risk of a falling. Proper footwear is an important element that can help improve balance, especially in older people who may struggle with mobility and balance issues.



When selecting a shoe to improve balance, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Put shoes to the 1-2-3 test.
 - Step 1: Press on both sides of the heel area to ensure the heel is stiff and won't collapse.
 - Step 2: Bend the shoe to check for toe flexibility. The shoe shouldn't bend too much in the toe box area, but it shouldn't be too stiff and inflexible either.
 - Step 3: Try twisting the shoe; it shouldn't twist in the middle.
- Have your feet professionally measured every time you shoe shop. Natural aging and health changes can cause the size of your feet to change. Measure both feet—late in the day—and shop for the larger foot.
- Bring the type of socks you plan to wear with the shoes and walk around the store in the shoes before you purchase them.
- If you don't feel comfortable or steady in the store, don't buy them. Shoes should feel comfortable and supportive right away; if they don't feel good right away, breaking them in won't improve things.
- If you have specific health challenges or foot issues make sure to have a conversation with your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle podiatrist about the best footwear for your needs. Upon examination, your podiatrist may prescribe orthotics—biomechanical inserts that go into your shoes. Remember to take your orthotics with you when you shop and try them out in the shoes you're considering.



Custom orthotics, prescribed by our doctors, can help correct conditions and offer real relief for your lower limbs. NorthPointe Foot &

Ankle also offers substantial savings on a second pair of custom orthotics for those wishing to add support to an additional pair of shoes. Our professional team is available to help you easily obtain the support you need.

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Foot Care for Seniors



It's normal for people to experience some foot problems as they age. But experts say that problems with feet can be the first sign of more serious medical conditions, particularly among older adults. Health problems, such as arthritis, diabetes, nerve issues, and circulatory disorders, may first be manifested in the feet. That is why it is important to pay attention to your feet and seek medical attention as soon as you notice a problem.

- Practice good foot care. Check your feet regularly or have a member of your family check them for you.
- Keep blood circulating to your feet as much as possible. Do this by putting your feet up when you are sitting or lying down, stretching if you've had to sit for a long while, walking, having a gentle foot massage, or taking a warm foot bath.
- Wear comfortable shoes that fit well to prevent pressures that can lead to friction and infection.
- Avoid exposing your feet to cold temperatures.



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