NorthPointe Foot & Ankle
27901 Woodward Ave.
Suite 110
Berkley, MI 48072
(248) 545-0100
MichiganFootCare.com

Lee Hoffman, DPM
Brian Kissel, DPM
Charles Kissel, DPM
Michael Schey, DPM
David Ungar, DPM
Marc Weitzman, DPM

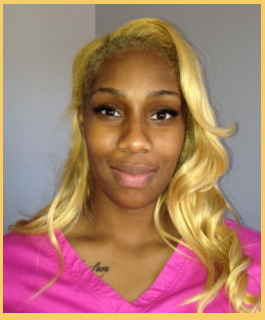
MEET OUR TEAM

Abril Chavis

Abril earned her Medical Assistant certification in 2009. Prior to joining our NorthPointe Foot & Ankle team, she worked at OB/GYN, ENT and family practice offices.

As a medical assistant, Abril is often the first person that meets you in the exam room. She checks to make sure you are comfortable and gathers basic information.

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



In her spare time she enjoys spending time with her mother. They love to shop and experience a variety of different foods from local restaurants.

NorthPointe News

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Toe and Metatarsal Fractures

The structure of the foot is complex, consisting of bones, muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues. Of the 26 bones in the foot, 19 are toe bones and metatarsal bones (the long bones in the mid-foot). Fractures of the toe and metatarsal bones are common and require evaluation by a specialist.

A fracture is a break in the bone. Fractures can be divided into two categories: traumatic fractures and stress fractures.

Traumatic fractures (also called acute fractures) are caused by a direct blow or impact, such as seriously stubbing your toe. Traumatic fractures can be *displaced* or *non-displaced*. If the fracture is displaced, the bone is broken in such a way that it has changed in position (dislocated).

Stress fractures are tiny, hairline breaks that are usually caused by repetitive stress. Stress fractures often afflict athletes who, for example, too rapidly increase their running mileage. They can also be caused by an abnormal foot structure, deformities, or osteoporosis. Improper footwear may also lead to stress fractures.

Consequences of Improper Treatment

If a fractured toe or metatarsal bone is not treated correctly, serious complications may develop

- A deformity in the bony architecture which may limit the ability to move the foot or cause difficulty in fitting shoes
- Arthritis, which may be caused by a fracture in a joint (the juncture where two bones meet), or may be a result of
- angular deformities that develop when a displaced fracture is severe or hasn't been properly corrected
- Chronic pain and deformity
- Non-union, or failure to heal, can lead to subsequent surgery or chronic pain.

Treatment of Toe Fractures

Fractures of the toe bones are almost always traumatic fractures. Treatment for traumatic fractures depends on the break itself and may include these options:

- ***Rest.*** Sometimes rest is all that is needed to treat a traumatic fracture of the toe.
- ***Splinting.*** The toe may be fitted with a splint to keep it in a fixed position.
- ***Rigid or stiff-soled shoe.*** Wearing a stiff-soled shoe protects the toe and helps keep it properly positioned.
- ***"Buddy taping".*** Taping the fractured toe to another toe is sometimes appropriate, but in other cases it may be harmful.
- ***Surgery.*** If the break is badly displaced or if the joint is affected, surgery may be necessary. Surgery often involves the use of fixation devices, such as pins.

Treatment of Metatarsal Fractures

Breaks in the metatarsal bones may be either stress or traumatic fractures. Treatment of metatarsal fractures depends on the type and extent of the fracture, and may include:

- ***Rest.*** Sometimes rest is the only treatment needed to promote healing of a stress or traumatic fracture of a metatarsal bone.
- ***Avoid the offending activity.*** It is important to avoid the activity that led to the fracture. Crutches or a wheelchair are sometimes required to offload weight from the foot to give it time to heal.
- ***Immobilization, casting, or rigid shoe.*** A stiff-soled shoe or other form of immobilization may be used to protect the fractured bone while it is healing.
- ***Surgery.*** Some traumatic fractures of the metatarsal bones require surgery, especially if the break is badly displaced.
- ***Follow-up care.*** Your NorthPointe Foot and Ankle surgeon will provide instructions for care following surgical or non-surgical treatment. Physical therapy, exercises and rehabilitation may be included in a schedule to return to normal activities.

To receive our monthly newsletter, send your email address to: Doctors@NorthPointeFoot.com

Stay Balanced

Many people experience increasing difficulty with balance and safe mobility as they age, which leads to the common and serious problem of falls. These problems are associated with loss of confidence and decreasing ability to function independently. In many cases it leads to the consideration of institutional care. Injuries from falls are a major cause of death in the older population. Fortunately, most causes of falls and instability can be treated successfully and the risk of falling reduced.

How common are falls and balance problems in older persons?

Each year, falls occur in over a third of persons over age 65, and in over half of persons over age 75. About a third of the older population reports some difficulty with balance or ambulation. This percentage increases in frequency and severity after age 75.

What are the major causes of falls?

The most common causes of falls include environmental hazards (such as slippery floors and loose rugs), weak muscles, unstable balance, dizziness, vision problems and side effects from medications (such as dizziness and confusion).

How can I tell if I am at risk for falling?

The most important predictors of fall risk include: muscle weakness (difficulty rising from a sitting position without use of hands to push off); unsteady balance (needing to walk slowly or with a wide base of support to maintain balance); having fallen in the past year; and taking certain medications (some blood pressure medications as well as psychoactive medications, such as sedatives or anti-depressants).

What can I do to decrease my chances of falling?

Ask your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle physician to evaluate your strength, balance, gait, entire medication list and overall risk factors for falls. The chances are good that there will be a number of things that can be done to reduce fall risk, such as adjusting medications, obtaining physical therapy, starting an exercise regimen, or receiving an assistive device such as a cane or walker, to make walking safer.

What can be done to improve balance?

Similarly, there are a number of exercises and assistive devices that can improve stability. Ask your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle physician what would be best for you.

How can I make my home environment safer?

There are many pamphlets available to assist in hazard-proofing your home environment. Alternatively, a home health provider, such as a visiting nurse or occupational therapist, can come to your home and provide a hands-on inspection and set of recommendations. Common recommendations include installing bathroom grab bars, improving lighting in key areas, removing hazardous conditions on the floor, and making stairways and entrance areas safer.

What kind of walking aids are available and whom should I talk to about getting the right product?

A whole spectrum of walking aids are widely available, ranging from simple canes to elaborate types of walkers and wheelchairs. Your NorthPointe Foot & Ankle physician will advise you on the types of aids that are designed to offer support for your particular situation. When used properly, these aids can dramatically improve mobility and safety.

Footwear and Fall Prevention

Choosing the right kind of footwear is an important factor in reducing your risk for falls. Here are a few recommendations to keep you safe and help avoid falling:

- Avoid shoes that are excessively flexible and worn.
- Proper fit is critical. Shoes that are too big can be a hazard, but so can shoes that are too small. Ill-fitting shoes can cause calluses, corns, and sores.
- Avoid excessively slick-soled shoes, as well as those that are too “grippy.” A crepe sole is recommended because it also absorbs shock. Rubber soles are especially useful on slippery surfaces.
- Wearing shoes with low heels and a large or wide contact area may reduce the risk of a fall in everyday settings and activities. Anything with a very high or thick sole creates more imbalance. Avoid any shoe with a sole over half an inch.
- The size of your foot changes as you age. Make sure to have your foot measured before buying shoes to ensure proper fit.

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Prepare for Leaf Raking:

When tackling the task of leaf raking, there is a risk of injury due to the amount of bending, twisting, pulling and reaching motions required. Following is some advice to help prevent injury.

- Warm up your muscles by stretching
- Keep a straight back and turn your whole body to avoid twisting
- Use short strokes to avoid over extension
- Vary your movements to avoid access stress on one group of muscles.
- Bend at the knees and squat rather than at the waist to pick up leaf piles
- Make sure your rake is the proper height and weight
- Wear gloves to prevent blisters and slivers
- Wear shoes with slip resistant soles