

# FOOTNOTES 2009

NEWS YOU CAN USE FOR SPRING 2009

## Smell the flowers, but don't ignore heel pain



As the days of spring grow longer, many people use the additional hours of sunlight to go walking. It's an opportunity to exercise and enjoy the neighbors' gardens at the same time. But the combination of extra weight gained during the winter and unsupportive shoes often leads to plantar fasciitis, also known as heel pain.

Many people experience this pain with their first steps in the morning. Often it subsides, but can return later in the day if you spend a lot of time on your feet. The pain may be caused by inflammation of the plantar fascia, a band of tissue that extends from your heel bone and across your arch to the ball of your foot.

You can take a few basic measures to ease the pain, including doing exercises to stretch the Achilles tendon and calf muscles, applying an ice pack to the affected area for a few minutes several times a day, using over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medicines, protecting your feet by not going barefoot on hard surfaces, and wearing shoes with good arch support.

But if you don't get relief from these at-home remedies, come into our office. There may be another cause of your pain. With a thorough diagnostic examination, we'll determine what's causing the pain and suggest the best course of treatment for you. 🌱

## Get kids' sports injuries checked out

As children get out on the baseball and soccer fields this spring, they're learning to enjoy exercise, and that has tremendous benefits for their health. But parents need to know what to do if kids injure their feet or ankles.

Pain in a child's foot or ankle should never be ignored. Parents and coaches shouldn't let kids "play through" the pain. Children's bones, ligaments and tendons are still developing, and continuing to use an injured foot or ankle can result in problems that continue into adulthood.

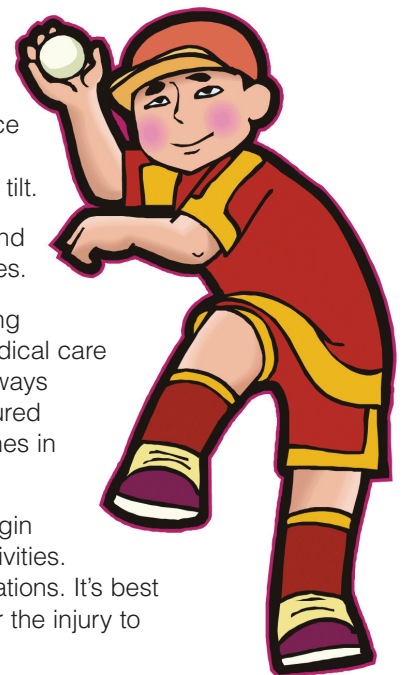
Protect your child's foot health by following these tips:

- Make sure your child has the right shoes for the sport and buy good-quality shoes with adequate support and cushioning.

- Examine shoes for signs of wear and replace when necessary. Old shoes can become uneven on the bottom, causing the ankle to tilt.
- Encourage coaches to include stretching and warm-up exercises into practices and games.

If, despite taking these precautions, your young athlete does injure a foot or ankle, prompt medical care is important. What seems like a sprain isn't always a sprain. For example, the child may have injured cartilage or broken one of the many small bones in the foot or ankle.

The sooner children receive treatment and begin rehabilitation, the sooner they can resume activities. Ignoring an injury can result in future complications. It's best to call our office for an appointment soon after the injury to head off any problems. 🌱



# That ‘something’s in my shoe’ feeling



Have you ever felt like your sock is bunched up under the ball of your foot, or like you have a pebble or foreign object in your shoe, along with a burning sensation in your toes?

If you feel this type of discomfort or pain, you may have a Morton's neuroma. This condition is a thickening or enlargement of the nerve tissue in the ball of the foot. It's also sometimes called "intermetatarsal neuroma."

Neuromas often form when the nerve is irritated or compressed. Sometimes tight shoes cause them. Runners and joggers sometimes develop them because of the repeated pressure that occurs when feet hit the pavement with every stride. Female joggers can be especially at risk, because running on hard, paved surfaces and then

switching to high heels with narrow toes puts a lot of stress on the feet.

Most neuromas begin gradually, and you may be able to eliminate the pain temporarily by massaging your foot, wearing comfortable shoes or taking a break from running. Unfortunately, neuromas tend to worsen over time as the temporary changes in the nerve become permanent.

Early intervention is important. Come in to our office when you start to have symptoms. A thorough evaluation will determine whether your discomfort is due to a neuroma or another condition. If treated early enough, non-invasive therapies such as padding, orthotics or shoe modifications may help you to get back to enjoying your favorite springtime activities. 🌱