



Foot & Practice

A foot health message from

Treating sporting feet



Sports Podiatry

High-impact sports such as basketball, soccer, running, football, cricket and indeed any sport involving increased force and pressure on the feet can all lead to injuries requiring specialist treatment. Sports podiatry looks specifically at injuries to the foot, ankle and lower leg sustained through participation in physical activity.

Sports podiatric injuries come in two forms: overuse injuries caused by repeated pressure on tendons and joints; and biomechanical injuries caused by incorrect movement patterns. Biomechanical injuries are often impacted by overuse problems as athletes may be changing the way they walk, run or jump to compensate for an existing injury, thereby causing further damage.

The most prevalent sports injuries include shin splints, runner's knee, Achilles tendonitis, corns and bunions through to postural issues and lower back pain. Runners also complain of thickened nails that are also often ingrown. Long distance running is gruelling on feet and damage to skin and nails can lead to infection if left untreated.

Treatment for sports podiatric injuries includes screening to look at posture and movement, and biomechanical analysis. Painful corns, bunions, shin splints or other injuries can all be caused by unnatural biomechanics that can be corrected by the evaluation of sports shoes and the fitting of orthotics. Overuse injuries involving the skin and nails also benefit from medicinal treatments, and in some cases surgery for problems such as ingrown nails. Some injuries benefit from sports massage therapy and corrective exercise regimes.

Pronation and sports

Over or under-pronating can lead to serious injury, especially when this movement is repeated through regular sport. Over-pronation in particular is a common problem among athletes, which leads to joint misalignment, as the feet are constantly moving less efficiently leading to joint realignment to compensate for this change. People with low arches often suffer from problems of over-pronation.

Over-pronation increases strain on muscles and tendons as they have to work double-time to provide extra support to joints. The most common injuries that result from over-pronation include sprained ankles and torn tendons and ligaments as the foot is rolling out too far before rolling back in again, providing unstable support that is difficult for tendons to reinforce. Achilles tendonitis, knee injuries and shin splints can all be attributed to over-pronation as these are all repetitive strain injuries caused by the huge amounts of added pressure being placed on those areas.

A podiatrist can evaluate an athlete's biomechanics to determine the degree of over-pronation and provide treatment to help restore a natural degree of pronation in the athlete's stride. Usually this involves examination of sports shoes and the fitting of orthotics in line with the biomechanical examination results to provide extra support and reduce muscle, tendon and ligament strain.

