

# FOOT NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER FOR SPRINGFIELD PODIATRY AND ACCURATE FOOT & DIABETIC CARE

August, 2022 Edition

## NEUROMAS:

Neuromas are a common condition we see in our practice. By definition, a neuroma is a benign tumor of nerve tissue, and in the foot, the neuromas we see involve swelling of the tissue surrounding the nerve (the perineural sheath) due to irritation and inflammation of the nerve. Over time, this perineural tissue may become thickened, much in the same way a callus forms on the skin from chronic irritation.

Neuromas in the feet can form along any nerve and may be due to an injury, pressure from shoes, injury to the nerve during surgery, scar tissue formation, etc. The "classic" neuroma we see in the foot occurs between the metatarsal heads that make up the ball of the foot. When the bones press on the nerve running between them, the nerve becomes inflamed, leading to swelling around the nerve. This swelling creates more pressure on the nerve, causing such symptoms as tingling, pins and needles, sharp pain and electrical sensations that can radiate into the toes. You may have heard the term, "Morton's neuroma". Strictly speaking, this occurs between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> metatarsal heads.

In the case of a Morton's neuroma, the pain often radiates into the adjacent sides of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> toes as the swelling tends to occur where the single nerve running between the metatarsals splits into two nerves and gives sensation to the adjacent sides of the toes. In some cases, the toes may become numb. In addition to the symptoms noted above, patients frequently describe a sensation of walking on a pea or feeling as though their sock is rolled up under their toes due to the swelling of the nerve. As this single intermetatarsal nerve splits into the two digital nerves, these nerves are closer to the sole of the foot between the base of the toes.

When we evaluate a patient for a neuroma, we do a manual test whereby we squeeze the metatarsal heads together while pressing up on the neuroma. Both the patient and the doctor can feel a clicking sensation in the area, and this may elicit the nerve pain that radiates into the toe. This is called a positive Mulder's test. X-rays may show abnormalities of the metatarsals such as enlargement of the heads or too close a proximity of the heads. Having other deformities such as bunions or bunionettes (bunions on the outside of the foot at the base of the 5<sup>th</sup> toe) make the feet wider, leading to a compression of the metatarsal heads in shoes. Wearing pointed shoes and high heels often cause and aggravate neuromas. Many people feel better when they remove their shoes. Going down steps and curbs, standing on tip toes and squatting will often aggravate neuromas.

Treatments of neuromas generally start with conservative measures such as changing shoe selection to a wider shoe with a lower heel. We often dispense arch supports or prescribe custom orthotics with a metatarsal pad that lifts and splay the metatarsal heads to alleviate the pressure on the inflamed nerve. Patients may respond to anti-inflammatory medications such as Advil or Aleve, as well as steroid injections at the nerve site to reduce the swelling and inflammation. Laser therapy and amnion injections are also helpful at reducing the pain of a neuroma. In the case of chronic neuromas where the surrounding perineural tissue is excessively thickened much like scar tissue, the patient may require surgery to remove the thickened portion of nerve. Of course, this will lead to numbness to the adjacent sides of the two toes. Similarly, the nerve can be destroyed using denatured alcohol injections, also leading to numbness. Some find success with releasing the ligament between the two metatarsal heads to provide more space for the nerve which may alleviate the pain.

If you suspect that you may have a neuroma or similar condition, please call the office for an evaluation. The sooner a neuroma is treated, the easier it is to treat without removing or destroying the nerve.

## **PERSONALLY SPEAKING**

As mentioned in our July Foot Notes, Dr. Danielle Seiler joined our practice on July 18<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Seiler comes to us with 8 years of private practice experience. A graduate of the Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine in 2011, Dr. Seiler

completed her surgical residency training at St Luke's University Hospital and Health Center in Allentown, PA in 2014. She practiced for four years in Wyomissing, PA and four years in South Jersey. Dr. Seiler resides in South Philadelphia with her husband and enjoys exercising, cooking, exploring restaurants, traveling, tap dancing, track and field, soccer and piano. We are very excited to have Dr. Seiler with us, and she looks forward to meeting you at your next visit!

## **MYTH BUSTER**

Many people believe that we only use 10% of our brain. This is not true. Sophisticated brain imaging studies show that even at rest, all areas of our brain are active. From an evolutionary standpoint, it would not make sense that humans evolved to have large brains and then not use them to their full capacity. So maybe, you are smarter than you think!

## **FUN FACTS**

The average adult human brain weighs about 3 lbs, or 2% of our body weight, yet it uses over 20% of our body's energy to function.

## **WHAT'S NEW**

Many of our patients are using Tolcylen antifungal nail solution to successfully resolve their fungal toenails. We now have Tolcylen antifungal cream to treat athlete's foot. This medication is only available in podiatrist's offices and combines a powerful antifungal medication with skin softeners and conditioners as well as ingredients to exfoliate the scaling skin and soothe the irritation and itching of athlete's foot. If you are suffering from a fungal infection of the skin, ask us about the Tolcylen antifungal cream.

## **QUOTES**

“You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.” – Mae West

## **PUNNY STUFF**

I left my job as a stage designer. I left without making a scene.

## **PUZZLE:**

Call today for your foot health evaluation!

In Drexel Hill, call 484-459-5954

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In West Chester, call 610-436-5883

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Or visit us at [www.drsiegerman.com](http://www.drsiegerman.com)

Dr. Julie Siegerman

Follow us on Instagram @springfield.podiatry