

Morton's Neuroma - Information for Patients

This leaflet tells you about the condition known as Morton's Neuroma. It explains what is involved, and the common complications associated with this Condition. It is not meant to replace discussion between you and your doctor, but as a guide to be used in connection to what is discussed with your doctor.

What is Morton's Neuroma?

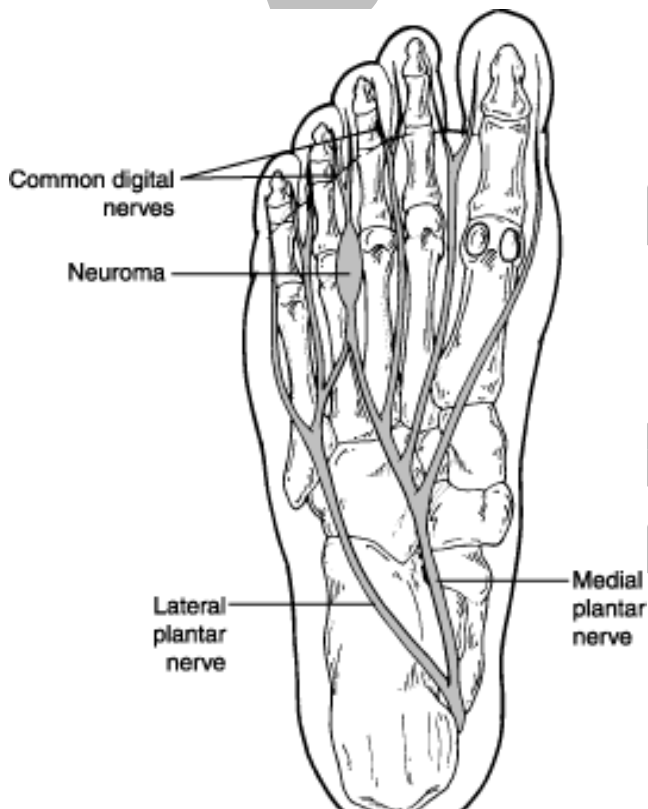
A neuroma is a benign tumour of a nerve, and this thickening of nerve tissue can develop in various parts of the body. Morton's Neuroma is not a tumour, but a thickening of the tissue that surrounds the digital nerve that leads to the toes. It is usually found at the base of the third and fourth toes.

What causes it?

The nerves become trapped between the metatarsal heads causing pain. This is often due to ill-fitting footwear and wearing high heeled shoes.

What are the signs and symptoms?

There are no outward signs of Morton's Neuroma, but persistent pain felt in the ball of the foot, like "walking on a marble" is often described as a symptom. You may experience numbness and/or pain in the toes, heightened by wearing high-heeled shoes or by walking.



How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will examine your foot to feel for the enlarged nerve, putting pressure on the foot to replicate the pain. You may be asked to have an x-ray to rule out a fracture or arthritis.

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How is it treated?

Initially your doctor may recommend changing the style of your footwear to avoid high heels and tight shoes. Shoe inserts may be used to help to lift and separate the bones and reduce pressure on the nerve.

An injection may be given to help to reduce pain and swelling. However often minor surgery is needed.

What does surgery involve?

There are two surgical approaches to treating a neuroma where the affected nerve is either removed or released. The surgery involves cutting the metatarsal ligament, which typically causes most of the nerve compression. The dorsal approach has an incision made on the top of the foot. The plantar approach uses an incision made on the sole of the foot. Your doctor will discuss with you the best treatment for you.

This procedure will only be carried out with your consent, and you will be asked to sign a consent form.

How long will I be in hospital?

If you are medically fit and have someone who can look after you after the operation then you may be able to have your operation carried out as “daycase” surgery. This means that the patient is usually able to leave hospital on the same day.

If you have other medical problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure or asthma you may have to come into hospital the day before the operation, and stay overnight after surgery.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

This operation produces good results in most cases, however a small number of people who have this procedure may experience one or more of the problems listed:

- Some complications are associated with any surgery i.e. thrombosis (blood clot) and anaesthetic problems.
- Swelling – because your foot is at the bottom of your body fluid tends to collect in the tissues and cause swelling. This may be slow to disappear.
- Infection in the wound, plaster problems and minor damage to the nerves in the toe can occur in any foot surgery. Rarely infection of the bone may occur.
- Once the neuroma is removed the empty space may fill with blood, resulting in a hematoma.
- The stump of the nerve can begin to grow again. If this happens the nerve grows in width and length. This can be treated by injection or further surgery.

What are the benefits of having this procedure?

The majority of people who have this surgery experience an improvement in their condition. The ultimate aim of the surgery is to relieve pain and prevent the neuroma from recurring.

What are the alternatives to surgery?

Non surgical treatment methods may already been tried and failed. Your doctor would not have suggested surgery unless they believed it was the best course of treatment. If you are concerned about having the procedure, or have any further queries, please speak to your consultant.

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What can I expect after the operation?

If possible the findings of the operation will be discussed with you before you go home, but this is not always possible. The ward staff will tell you any important message from the surgeon, and the findings of the procedure will be discussed in clinic.

There will be some pain, but you will be given medication to control this. To help to prevent swelling after the operation you will need to keep your foot up. If the swelling of the foot or leg worsens when the foot is elevated above heart level you should speak to your doctor.

It is very important that you notify your doctor if you get an increase in pain when you go home, especially if the pain is not controlled by elevating your leg and taking mild painkillers, as this may be the first signs of an infection.

What happens when I go home?

If necessary an outpatient appointment will be made for you to return to clinic. You will be given exercises to do after surgery, and these must be done to help to prevent stiffness. When you first go home you must spend most of your time resting, with your foot lifted above heart level.

When the foot is lowered you will initially experience swelling, and the foot will throb. As time passes the length of time you can keep your foot down without too much pain will increase, until two or three weeks after surgery when you should be able to keep your foot down most of the time.

When can I go back to work?

This will depend on the work you do and how you get to work. If you have a job that is not affected by having your foot in plaster, and you could get to work, then you could probably go back to work a week after surgery. If you have a manual job you may be off work for up to three months. Your surgeon will advise you about going back to work.

When can I drive?

Once your plaster has been removed you may be able to resume driving. You must be able to safely make and emergency stop or your car insurance will not cover you in the event of an accident. Ask your surgeon for advice on when it is safe for you to drive again.

Contact Us:

If you are going to have an operation you may be asked to attend the hospital for a pre-operative assessment. Please ask our staff any questions you may have about your treatment. Alternatively, you can phone the main hospital switchboard on 0121 424 2000 and ask to speak to your consultant's secretary.

Further sources of information:

The Society of Chiropractors
53 Welbeck Street
London
W1M 7HE
Telephone: 020 7-486 3381

<http://www.feetforlife.org>

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Our commitment to confidentiality

We keep personal and clinical information about you to ensure you receive appropriate care and treatment. Everyone working in the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential.

We will share information with other parts of the NHS to support your healthcare needs, and we will inform your GP of your progress unless you ask us not to. If we need to share information that identifies you with other organisations we will ask for your consent. You can help us by pointing out any information in your records which is wrong or needs updating.

Additional Sources of Information:

Go online and view NHS Choices website for more information about a wide range of health topics <http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx>

You may want to visit one of our Health Information Centres located in:

- Main Entrance at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital Tel: 0121 424 2280
 - Treatment Centre at Good Hope Hospital Tel: 0121 424 9946
 - Clinic Entrance Solihull Hospital Tel: 0121 424 5616
- or contact us by email: healthinfo.centre@heartofengland.nhs.uk.

Dear Patient

We welcome your views on what you thought of this patient information leaflet, also any suggestions on how you feel we can improve through our feedback link below:

- Patient Information Feedback email: patientinformationleafletfeedback@heartofengland.nhs.uk

If you wish to make any other comments this can be done through the links listed below:

- Patient Opinion: www.patientopinion.org.uk
- I want great care: www.iwantgreatcare.org (Here you can leave feedback about your doctor)

Be helpful and respectful: think about what people might want to know about our patient information and this hospital and how your experiences might benefit others. Remember your words must be polite and respectful, and you cannot name individuals on the sites.

If you have any questions you may want to ask about your condition or your treatment or if there is anything you do not understand and you wish to know more about please write them down and your doctor will be more than happy to try and answer them for you.

