

SPORTS MEDICINE

WHAT IS PODIATRIC SPORTS MEDICINE?

Sports medicine is dedicated to helping athletes of all fitness levels succeed at their chosen activity. Whether you're a professional athlete or just beginning an exercise routine, chances are that you will benefit from the advice or medical attention from a podiatrist sometime in your athletic pursuits. Sports medicine isn't just about surgery and repairing sports-related injuries, it is also about injury prevention.

Footnote

The American Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine was founded in 1970 by a group of podiatric sports physicians.

WHAT TYPES OF INJURIES ARE TREATED IN SPORTS MEDICINE?

Many athletes suffer from similar sports medicine complaints, but whether your injury is common or more obscure, a podiatrist will be able to get you back to your sport as soon as is safely possible. In every sport, from aerobics to cycling to basketball, athletes are subject to overuse and stress injuries. Following is a list of some common sports injuries.

Ankle Sprains and Other Injuries

Athletes who participate in sports that require side-to-side motions, or are played in a confined area or on uneven surfaces, may be at risk for various ankle injuries. Commonly, ligaments around the ankle are over-stretched or torn, resulting ankle sprains. For many ankle injuries, rest, rehabilitation and strengthening exercises will be sufficient treatment, though more severe injuries may require surgery. For more information on ankle sprains, please see the related brochure on the Foot & Ankle Specialists of West Michigan's web site.

Blisters

Blisters on the foot are a common complaint for many athletes, and occur due to repeated friction, such as the foot rubbing against a certain place in athletic socks or shoes. While blisters will usually heal within several days after the source of friction is eliminated, they may become infected, requiring medical attention.

Heel Pain

Heel pain may be caused by many different conditions resulting from overuse, unaccustomed stress, or injury. For more information on heel pain, please see the related brochure on the Foot & Ankle Specialists of West Michigan's web site.

Neuromas

Often caused by poor-fitting athletic shoes, neuromas are pinched nerves in the foot that may cause severe pain and numbness of the inner toes. For more information on neuromas, please see the related brochure on the Foot & Ankle Specialists of West Michigan's web site.

Plantar Fasciitis

The plantar fascia is a thick band of tissue on the bottom of the foot that is vulnerable to injury and inflammation, leading to plantar fasciitis. Runners and other athletes are vulnerable to this condition, also known as “heel-spur syndrome.” For more information on plantar fasciitis, please see the related brochure on the Foot & Ankle Specialists of West Michigan’s web site.

Sinus Tarsi Syndrome

Sinus tarsi syndrome is characterized by pain and a feeling of instability in the area on the outside of the foot between the heel and the ankle bone, and is often caused by an ankle sprain. With sinus tarsi syndrome, uneven surfaces may be difficult to walk on. A podiatrist may diagnose sinus tarsi syndrome with x-rays, a bone scan, computed tomography (CT) scan or a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) evaluation, and may treat this condition with anti-inflammatory medication, stable shoes, a period of immobilization, ankle sleeve or corrective shoe inserts.

Stress Fractures

Probably the most common injury for aerobics instructors, stress fractures are caused by poor shoe selection, hard surfaces, and overuse. As compared with men, women are more likely to develop stress fractures—usually in the lesser metatarsal bones. When swelling and pain occur, seeing a podiatrist for x-ray evaluation and early treatment can prevent a disabling injury.

Tendonitis

Weekend or brand-new athletes may be prone to tendonitis, or swelling of the tendon, in the ankle, foot, or the Achilles tendon. Since this potentially painful condition may be difficult to treat, it is important to get medical attention at the first sign of pain. For more information on tendonitis, please see the related brochure on the Foot & Ankle Specialists of West Michigan’s web site.

TREATING SPORTS INJURIES

As discussed above, treatment for sports injuries may vary depending of specific injury, severity, and personal medical history. Your podiatrist will be able to prescribe a course of treatment best suited to your needs.