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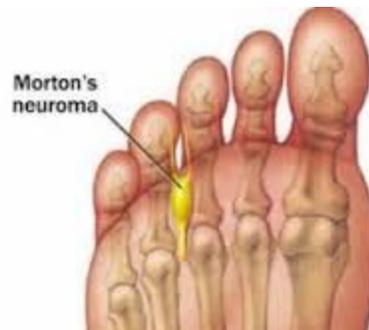
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Morton's Neuroma:

A neuroma is a benign tumor, or benign swelling around a nerve, in this case, at the base of the toe or toes that can cause pain on the bottom of the forefoot (ball) and numbness in the toes. With a Morton's neuroma, the nerve is one of the common digital nerves that runs between the metatarsal bones, and can become pinched or inflamed, causing the characteristic pain and numbness. The condition is most common with the nerve that runs between the 3rd and 4th toes. The incidence is much more common (8-10X) in women than in men. The condition often starts without an incident, but may be caused by injury or excessive pressure. Once the nerve gets irritated, it often does not stop causing symptoms.



Symptoms:

Normally, there are no outward signs, such as a lump or swelling, because it is not really a tumor. There may be pain on the ball of the foot that sometimes radiates towards the toes. The pain may be burning or aching. Pain is usually worse when wearing shoes. Night-time pain is unusual.

High-heeled shoes can make symptoms worse, as can pushing off and running. Tight, narrow shoes, in particular can aggravate this condition by causing compression of the nerve between the bones in the foot.



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Diagnosis:

During the examination, your physician will feel for a palpable mass or a "click" between the bones. He or she will put pressure on the spaces between the toe bones to try to replicate the pain and look for calluses or evidence of stress fractures in the bones that might be the cause of the pain. Range of motion tests will rule out arthritis or joint inflammations. X-rays may be required to rule out a stress fracture or arthritis of the joints that join the toes to the foot.

Treatment:

Initial therapies are nonsurgical and relatively simple. They can involve one or more of the following treatments:

1. Changes in footwear. Avoid high heels or tight shoes, and wear wider shoes with lower heels and a soft sole. This enables the bones to spread out and may reduce pressure on the nerve, giving it time to heal.
2. Orthoses. Custom shoe inserts and pads also help relieve irritation by lifting and separating the bones, reducing the pressure on the nerve.
3. Injection. One or more injections of a corticosteroid medication can reduce the swelling and inflammation of the nerve, bringing some relief.
4. If conservative treatment does not relieve your symptoms, your orthopaedic surgeon may discuss surgical treatment options with you. Surgery entails removing the neuroma, a short out-patient surgical procedure.