

Foot and Ankle Injuries

EXPERT ADVICE

Preventing Plantar Fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis is caused by repetitive stretching of the plantar fascia, the thick connective tissue on the bottom of the foot. To prevent plantar fasciitis:

- Always warm up well and stretch before participating in sports.
- Wear good, supportive shoes for your athletic activities.
- Keep the muscles of your feet and ankles strong to support your arch.
- Don't try running to lose weight after a rapid weight gain. Walk first, and stretch the muscles of the foot and calf to help condition your body before running.

Source: American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine



BY BRIAN BEISE

Your feet do a lot of work when you play a sport, usually bearing the entire weight of the body. So it comes as no surprise that foot injuries are among the most common in sports.

BROKEN BONES

The human feet have extremely intricate skeletal structures. Boasting 26 bones each, they account for about 10% of all broken bone injuries. While most foot fractures are acute—like a broken toe from an accidental kick or a broken bone from a falling object or forceful collision—some, like stress fractures, are chronic.

Stress fractures are common among runners or those unaccustomed to training for long periods on hard surfaces. With the repeated stress of “pounding the pavement,” small cracks or slivers can form in the foot’s weight-bearing metatarsals (foot bones).

OTHER TYPES OF FOOT & ANKLE INJURIES

- **Ankle sprains.** Ankle sprains occur more than almost any other injury, and certainly

more than any foot injury. Acute injuries, they are often caused by a sudden stop or irregular turn of the foot.

- **“Turf toe.”** Running on artificial surfaces can lead to a straining of your big toe, otherwise known as “turf toe.” A chronic injury, turf toe can be treated with rest and stretching. If you get it, you’ll need to check to make sure you’re wearing the right footwear.
- **Tendon issues.** Misaligned tendons can lead to various injuries, including plantar fasciitis, caused by inward-turning feet hitting the ground as you run (known as over-pronation), and “hammer toe,” caused by misaligned tendons in the toe. If treated promptly, orthotics can effectively treat these injuries. However, if hammer toe is left alone, the toe can become immobile, requiring medical attention.

To best avoid and recover from foot injuries, make sure to use proper footwear, stretch, and listen to your feet. They may have a lot to say when you’re on the court or track. 🔄

DID YOU KNOW?

Depending on the sport, the feet may absorb up to 20 times a person’s body weight in shearing in loading forces.

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