



## Suffolk Podiatry

### Forefoot Pain : “Metatarsalgia”

#### What is Metatarsalgia?

Metatarsalgia is a term used to refer to any of a collection of different conditions that cause pain in the forefoot. Some of the more common causes of this pain may include:

- **Morton’s neuroma** : a trapped nerve in the forefoot.
- **Capsulitis** : where the connective tissue surrounding a joint becomes inflamed.
- **Bursitis** : where a “bursa” (protective fluid-filled cushion) under the joint becomes inflamed.
- **Bunions & Hallux Limitus** : This is pain that usually involves the big toe joint/s (a separate leaflet called “Painful Toe Joints” is available from the Suffolk GP Federation website).



#### What can I do to manage the pain?

- **Wear the right shoes**  
Your forefoot is a dynamic structure; it needs room to spread out and contract while you walk. If your forefoot or toes touch the sides or end of the shoe, your foot isn’t free to move as it should, meaning your shoes could be contributing to (or even causing) your foot pain. Avoid shoes that have a raised heel, as this will put more pressure on the forefoot. A separate Footwear Advice leaflet may have been supplied to you or is available from the podiatry website with more tips on finding shoes that could help you.
- **Rest**  
Rest and raise your foot when you can.
- **Ice**  
Try holding an ice pack (or bag of frozen peas) in a tea towel on the painful area for 5 - 10 minutes every few hours. If you have poor circulation or diabetes, seek advice from your podiatrist or doctor before using ice in this way.
- **Pain Killers / Anti-inflammatories**  
Take ibuprofen or paracetamol if it is safe for you to do so. (Some patients may have medical conditions where it is not safe to take certain "over the counter" medicines. Always read the



manufacturer's instructions carefully before taking any medication, and speak to your doctor or pharmacist if you are in any doubt).

Being overweight can put unnecessary strain on your feet. Managing your weight will help reduce pressure and stress on your painful feet. Google "NHS BMI calculator" for more guidance about managing your weight.

- **Try wearing Insoles**

Insoles or pads specially designed to be put in your shoes can be purchased from shoe shops, cobblers, chemists, or through the internet. Suffolk podiatry has a dedicated leaflet "Buying Insoles to help your foot pain" which you may find helpful. You can find this on the Suffolk GP Federation Podiatry web page:

<https://suffolkfed.org.uk/healthcare-services/podiatry/>

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**Further help:**

If you have followed the suggested self-care advice and are still experiencing significant pain, your GP may be able to refer you for specialist advice and intervention (including, in some instances, steroid injections or surgery).

Alternatively, you may want to consider visiting a Private Podiatrist who can provide biomechanical assessment and insoles. (We recommend checking that a podiatrist is registered with Health and Care Professions Council or the "HCPC").

Further advice is also available on the NHS website under "Pain in the ball of the foot"

If you also have pain in the hands/fingers or morning stiffness that lasts for longer than 30 minutes, this could be a sign of inflammatory arthritis and you should speak to your GP.

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[www.suffolkfed.org.uk](http://www.suffolkfed.org.uk)

An NHS service provided by Suffolk GP Federation working with ESNEFT (East Suffolk & North Essex NHS Foundation Trust) in the East, West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust in the West, Suffolk County Council and Norfolk & Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

