

Hallux Limitus / Rigidus Advice sheet

What is Hallux Limitus / Rigidus?

This is a common form of arthritis located at the base of the big toe (this joint is called the metatarsophalangeal, or MTP joint). This joint is important to the proper function of the foot, as it needs to bend when the foot is in motion.

If this joint begins to stiffen (Hallux Limitus), walking can become a painful experience. The MTP joint has cartilage that covers the bones. Sometimes the cartilage can be damaged by either wear or tear or injury, which can lead to the formation a bone spur (overgrowth). This overgrowth can reduce the range of motion in the toe (Hallux Limitus), ultimately resulting in complete loss of movement (Hallux Rigidus).

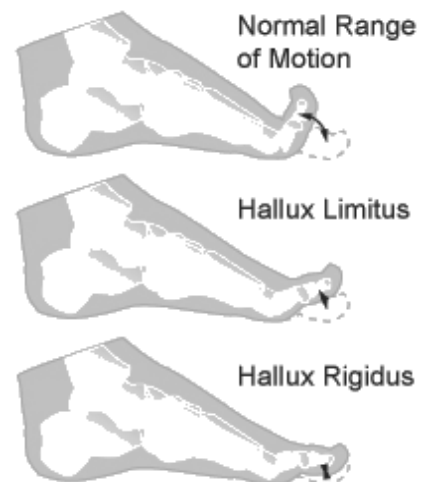
What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of Hallux Limitus / Rigidus include stiffness in the big toe when walking or swelling around the big toe joint. A bump such as a callous or bunion could also be suggestive of this condition, as can limitation in the range of motion.

How can it be treated?

Treatment may include using anti-inflammatory oral medications or an injection of medication and local anaesthetic to reduce this swelling. If bursitis is present it may be possible to drain some fluid from around the joint. The podiatrist may be able to take care of any corns or calluses that develop due to the bone deformities. They will also you advice on how to manage these areas regularly yourself. They may advise you on different foot wear or possibly prescribe an orthotic device if appropriate.

Because the joint is usually most painful when the toe is bent upwards during walking, it can help to stiffen the sole of your shoe so that it does not bend while walking. If you do this, you may need a small "rocker bar" on the sole of your shoe so that you can rock over this while walking instead of bending your toe up. Once the movement in the toe becomes severely restricted modifying footwear as above is really the only option other than surgery.



Individual advice

Useful Information for patients

www.patient.co.uk

www.nhsinform.co.uk

www.paintoolkit.org
nhs24 MSK Help App