Turf Toe

Turf toe is a condition of pain at the base of the big toe, located at the ball of the foot. The condition is usually caused from either jamming or extending the toe beyond normal limits (*hyperextension*). This is the result of pushing off repeatedly when running or jumping. The main problem is pain at the base of the toe, but there may also be stiffness and swelling. The name turf toe comes from the fact that this injury is especially common among athletes who play on hard surfaces, such as artificial turf and basketball courts. Hard surfaces combined with running and jumping makes this a common sports injury.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis of turf toe is not difficult. It is made by examination. X-rays may be taken to make sure there is no break in the bone *(fracture*). Not doing surgery (*conservative treatment*) solves the problem most of the time. Conservative treatment includes the following home care instructions.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Apply ice to the sore area for 15 to 20 minutes, four times per day while awake, for the first 4 days. Put the ice in a plastic bag and place a towel between the bag of ice and your skin. Use ice if possible following any activities, even after the first four days.
- Keep your leg elevated when possible to lessen swelling and discomfort in the toe.
- Use crutches with non-weight bearing on the affected foot for ten days, or as needed for pain. Then you may walk as the pain allows, or as instructed. Start gradually with weight bearing on the affected foot. Shoes with stiff soles will generally be helpful in limiting pain for the first 1 to 2 weeks.
- Continue to use crutches or cane until you can stand on your foot without causing pain.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

- You have an increase in bruising, swelling, or pain in your toe.
- Pain relief is not obtained with medications.

Turf toe can return, and problems may be slow to improve. This is more common if you return to athletic activities too soon and do not allow the problem to fully recover. Surgery is rarely needed, but in certain cases it may be necessary. If a bone spur forms and severely limits motion of the toe joint, surgery to remove the spur and improve motion of the big toe may be helpful.

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