

HALLUX RIGIDUS (a.k.a. Hallux Limitus)

Hallux Rigidus: What is it?

- Hallux rigidus is essentially arthritis leading to stiffness and pain in the big toe joints [first MTP joint].
- Loss of cartilage associated with the top half of this joint is believed to occur due to repetitive jamming as the big toe joint attempts to move upward with each step.
- This can take many years to develop, but can become quite symptomatic.

What are the symptoms of Hallux Rigidus?

Patients with hallux rigidus will often present with:

- Pain and swelling in the great toe joint.
- Bone spurs (causing swelling) on the top half of the big toe joint.
- Symptoms that are aggravated by excessive repetitive upward movement of the big toe joint such as prolonged walking.

Non-Operative Treatment

Hallux rigidus can be successfully treated non-operatively in most patients. The central principle of non-operative treatment is to decrease the inflammation in the arthritic joint by limiting the motion through this joint. Successful non-operative management may include:

- Limiting the great toe motion with a stiff soled shoe or an orthotic with a rigid Morton's extension (Turf Toe Plate)
- Comfort shoe with a wide toe box to limit the irritation to the great toe.
- Anti-inflammatory medications may provide some symptomatic relief.
- Injection of corticosteroids into the great toe joint may provide some short-term improvement in symptoms

Operative Treatment

When non-operative treatment is unsuccessful there operative options that may be helpful

Cheilectomy. A cheilectomy may be performed to remove the prominent bone spurs on the top of the great toe and improve the motion in the joint. This can be a successful procedure for patients with mild to moderate hallux rigidus.

Great toe fusion. This can be a very successful procedure for patients with moderate to severe hallux rigidus. Patients already have very limited motion in the great toe so the loss of toe motion is usually not an issue and the pain relief can be dramatic.

Great toe joint replacement (1st MTP joint Arthroplasty). Some patients might be candidates for a joint replacement. This can maintain motion and provide pain relief but can be problematic if the joint replacement fails.

Hallux Rigidus (Arthritis Great toe joint)



Great Toe Bone Spur (viewed from the side)

