

## What is a Neuroma?

**A** neuroma is a painful condition, also referred to as a “pinched nerve” or a nerve tumor. It is a benign growth of nerve tissue frequently found between the third and fourth toes that brings on pain, a burning sensation, tingling, or numbness between the toes and in the ball of the foot.

The principle symptom associated with a neuroma is pain between the toes while walking. Those suffering from the condition often find relief by stopping their walk, taking off their shoe, and rubbing the affected area. At times, the patient will describe the pain as similar to having a stone in his or her shoe. The vast majority of people who develop neuromas are women.

## Symptoms

- ◆ Pain in the forefoot and between the toes.
- ◆ Tingling and numbness in the ball of the foot.
- ◆ Swelling between the toes.
- ◆ Pain in the ball of the foot when weight is placed on it.

## How Do You Get a Neuroma?

**A**lthough the exact cause for this condition is unclear, a number of factors can contribute to the formation of a neuroma.

- ◆ Biomechanical deformities, such as a high-arched foot or a flat foot, can lead to the formation of a neuroma. These foot types bring on instability around the toe joints, leading to the development of the condition.
  - ◆ Trauma can cause damage to the nerve, resulting in inflammation or swelling of the nerve.
  - ◆ Improper footwear that causes the toes to be squeezed together are problematic. Avoid high-heeled shoes higher than two inches. Shoes at this height can increase pressure on the forefoot area.
  - ◆ Repeated stress, common to many occupations, can create or aggravate a neuroma.

## What Can You Do for Relief?

- ◆ Wear shoes with plenty of room for the toes to move, low heels, and laces or buckles that allow for width adjustment.
- ◆ Wear shoes with thick, shock-absorbent soles and proper insoles that are designed to keep excessive pressure off of the foot.
- ◆ High heels should be avoided whenever possible because they place undue strain on the forefoot and can contribute to a number of foot problems.
- ◆ Resting the foot and massaging the affected area can temporarily alleviate neuroma pain. Use an ice pack to help to dull the pain and improve comfort.
- ◆ For simple, undeveloped neuromas, a pair of thick-soled shoes with a wide toe box is often adequate treatment to relieve symptoms, allowing the condition to diminish on its own. For more severe conditions, however, podiatric medical treatment or surgery may be necessary to remove the tumor.
- ◆ Use over-the-counter shoe pads. These pads can relieve pressure around the affected area.

## Treatment by Your Podiatric Physician

**T**reatment options vary with the severity of each neuroma, and identifying the neuroma early in its development is important to

