

# 5th Metatarsal fracture

The metatarsal bones are some of the most commonly fractured (broken) bones in the foot. The fracture has occurred in a part of the bone that normally heals well without problems. There are two main types of metatarsal fractures:

**Acute fractures** - due to an acute (sudden) injury to the foot (commonly dropping a heavy object on to the foot, fall, twisting or a sporting injury).

**Stress fractures** - due to overuse, or repetitive, injury to a normal metatarsal bone.

You have 5 Metatarsal bones in each foot they are known as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th the 1st Metatarsal is the largest and joins to your big toe.



## Symptoms

You may experience the following:

- The pain, usually over the fracture site, with tenderness and swelling you are experiencing in the foot should gradually settle over a period of several weeks.
- Difficulty walking.
- Bruising.
- You may have difficulty putting weight on the affected foot.
- Movement of your foot may also be limited.

## What do I need to do?

You will need to immediately remove any toe or ankle jewellery.

## How is your metatarsal fracture treated?

- You may be provided with a support for the foot, in the form of either a Velcro shoe or a removable boot, depending on the type of injury. If required, you will also be provided with crutches.

continued over...

- Early weight bearing (ie, putting weight on your injured foot) has been shown to help your symptoms settle more quickly. Because of this most people will not be given crutches, but we will assess each patient individually. Always try to walk normally ie, your heel strikes the floor first, rock forward on your foot, and then push off with your toes.
- Rest the affected joint for 48 hours after the injury. This will prevent further injury and allow the healing process to begin.
- Ice should be applied as soon as possible after the injury to ease the pain, swelling and bruising. This can be done by wrapping a packet of frozen vegetables (peas) or crushed ice in a wet tea towel or pillowcase to prevent ice burn. Gently press the ice pack onto the injured ankle for about 20 minutes, every 2 hours whilst awake for the first few days.
- To reduce swelling and decrease pain, always elevate the injured limb above the level of your hips especially in the first 2 weeks. This should preferably be across the settee, with your leg propped up on a pillow or cushion.
- Take simple painkillers, such as Paracetamol. Please read the dosage instructions on the package carefully. If you are unsure of which painkillers to take you can contact your GP Practice for advice.
- You may walk on the foot as much as the pain allows. If you have been given a shoe or boot you should gradually discard it over 4-6 weeks as the pain settles. Following this you should wear sturdy supportive shoes initially.
- Metatarsal fractures generally take around six to eight weeks to heal. However, some discomfort can persist longer than this and it can take up to 3 months for symptoms to settle completely, especially the swelling and aching towards the end of the day.
- You need to be able to perform an emergency stop safely and have good pedal control before you can drive again. You must not drive whilst still in the boot.
- You can resume impact and contact sports from 12 weeks after the injury.
- Smoking is known to delay healing and can prevent it all together. If possible, we would advise you to stop. Further advice can be found on the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/> or from your GP.

## What if I have a problem?

- Occasionally, the fracture may fail to heal and continue to be painful even after several months.
- If the pain gets worse or lasts more than 3 months, please contact the Fracture Clinic 0151 604 7069 (Monday to Friday , 8.30am until 3.30pm)

**Please contact your GP or NHS111 for any queries or concerns.**

**Please retain this leaflet for future reference.**

### Reference:

5th Metatarsal Fracture Leaflet, Orthopaedic Department,  
Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email [wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net](mailto:wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net)

September 2021 V2