

## MORTON'S NEUROMA



### **What is Morton's Neuroma?**

A Neuroma is a benign tumour of a nerve. Morton's Neuroma is not actually a tumour but a thickening of the tissue that surrounds the digital nerve between the toes.

Morton's Neuroma occurs as the nerve passes under the ligament connecting the toe bones (metatarsals) in the foot. Morton's Neuroma most frequently develops between the third and fourth toes usually in response to irritation, trauma or excessive pressure. It can also develop between second and third toes. It usually affects females though males can develop this condition as well.

### **What are the presenting complaints?**

- Burning pain in the ball of the foot that may radiate into the toes. The pain generally intensifies with activity or wearing shoes. Night pain is rare.
- There may also be numbness in the toes, or an unpleasant feeling in the toes.
- Sometimes it might feel that you are walking on marbles.
- Tight, narrow, high heeled shoes also aggravate this condition by compressing the toe bones and pinching the nerve.
- Runners may feel pain as they push off from the starting block.
- There can be a 'clunk' when the toes are rubbed together.

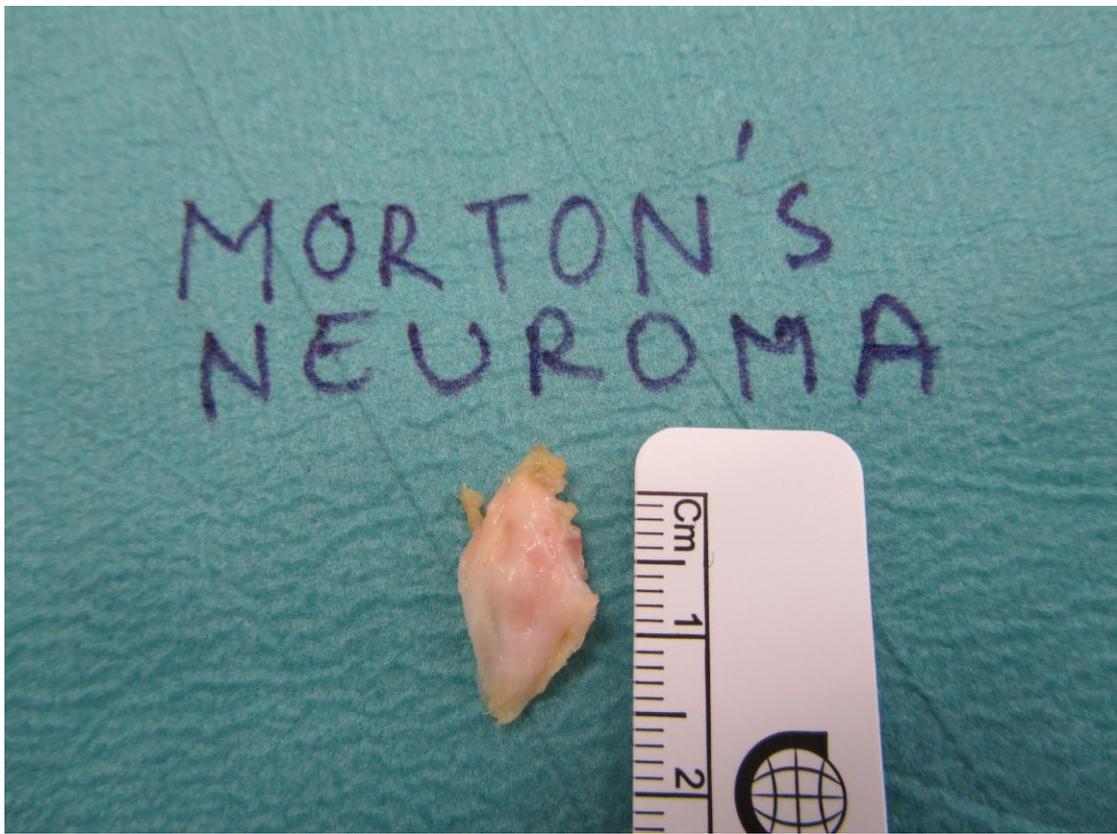
### **What investigations are required?**

The diagnosis is usually clinical. However X rays might be needed to exclude a stress fracture or arthritis. A steroid and local anaesthetic injection is used as this can be diagnostic as well as therapeutic. An ultrasound or MRI scan is required if the diagnosis is not clear.

### **What is the treatment?**

Initial treatment is nonsurgical and relatively simple. Several studies have shown that a combination of roomier, more comfortable shoes, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication, custom foot orthoses and cortisone injections provide relief in over 80 percent of people with Morton's Neuroma.

- **Changes in footwear:** Avoid high heels or tight shoes, and wear wider shoes with lower heels and a soft sole. This enables the bones to spread out and may reduce pressure on the nerve, giving it time to heal.
- **Steroid injection:** One or more injections of a corticosteroid can reduce the swelling and inflammation of the nerve, bringing some relief.
- **Surgical treatment:** It can be considered if the conservative treatment fails. Surgery involves excision of a small portion of the nerve with the Morton's Neuroma.



### **What is the recovery following surgery?**

The foot is in a bandage for two weeks. You can walk in an open sandal with or without crutches. The wound healing usually takes two weeks and most people recover within six weeks.

### **What are the complications of surgery?**

1. Wound healing problems
2. Infection
3. Numbness around toes (as small part of nerve is removed)
4. Swelling
5. Recurrence or incomplete relief (1 in 5)