

Hallux Rigidus/Limitus

Dealing With a Stiff and Painful Big Toe?

If you are living with a big toe that has become painful and stiff, coming here for information is a great first step. You may have a condition called hallux limitus. This is a progressive condition so learning early on the symptoms and treatment options will ensure you get the right foot care before the condition worsens.

What is Hallux Rigidus?

The term "hallux" refers to your big toe and the term "rigidus" is a description of the toe being rigid and unable to move. This condition may also use the term hallux "limitus" which simply describes the condition in a state where the toe has limited movement and is not yet completely stiff.

Hallux rigidus is a form of degenerative arthritis that develops in the joint at the base of the big toe. This joint is the most common place for arthritis to develop in the foot and can be quite painful and debilitating. If you think about it, this joint has to bend every single time you want to take a step or even stand up straight. Hallux rigidus is a progressive condition meaning that it gets worse over time. Your joint may start out having a limited range of motion but progress to being completely stiff or even frozen in place.

What Are the Signs and Symptoms of Hallux Rigidus?

Dr. Harvey Danciger treats patients on a regular basis at his Palm Desert, CA office complaining of pain in their big toe.

When diagnosing for hallux rigidus, he may ask if you are experiencing one or more of the following symptoms:

- Pain or stiffness when your toe is pushed upwards such as when you try to walk, stand up, squat or stand up on your toes.
- Swelling or inflammation on the top of the joint
- Pain or discomfort when the weather is cold and damp
- Constant pain in the joint, even when resting
- A bump that develops on the top of the joint
- Having a grinding feeling when you move your toe up and down
- Difficulty wearing shoes
- Limping when you walk due to pain in the toe joint
- Pain in your hip, knee or back from changing the way you walk

What Causes Hallux Rigidus?

Now that you have read some fairly unpleasant symptoms of hallux rigidus, are you concerned if you are at risk? Maybe you have many of these symptoms and are looking to find out how they all started. There are several reasons why hallux rigidus can develop. Dr. Danciger often treats patients who unfortunately inherited feet that are predisposed to this condition. Having structural abnormalities can lead osteoarthritis in the big toe joint, resulting in this condition. Some examples of faulty foot structures that could put you at risk for hallux rigidus include:

- Fallen arches
- High arches
- Excessive pronation
- An elevated or abnormally long first metatarsal bone

Other causes may involve age, as this is a progressive condition, having a job that puts consistent stress on the toes such as having to stoop or squat often and repetitive injury to the toe. An improper running technique, dropping a heavy object on your toe and gout are also causes for this condition that Dr. Danciger sees with his patients.

What is the Treatment for Hallux Rigidus?

Since this condition worsens over time, seeking appropriate treatment at the onset of symptoms is essential for the health of the joint. There are some cases where surgery is the only way to fully eliminate pain. Dr. Danciger will be able to assess the severity of your condition and direct you to the right treatment option. Some of the more conservative treatment options Dr. Danciger can provide include:

- Medications to reduce inflammation and pain
- Shoe modifications
- Physical therapy
- Custom orthotics to stabilize the foot, support the arch and provide shock absorption

If you are noticing any of the symptoms mentioned above, please call us as soon as possible. Intervention is what will prevent this condition from worsening. Call our podiatric office to make an appointment (760) 568-0108 or go directly to our homepage.