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## Don't Ignore Your Kids' Heel Pain

With school sports seasons in full swing, it's important to remember athletes should never "play through the pain" in their feet. Left untreated, heel pain can lead to difficulty in walking that may require complicated therapy or treatment.

Our office sees an increase in pediatric patients reporting heel pain with sports such as football, soccer and basketball. Obesity is also emerging as another prominent cause of heel pain even with students in physical education class activities. The good news is that kids generally heal very quickly and treatment may be simple if it is taken care of promptly.

Kids undergoing growth spurts are especially susceptible to heel pain starting at age 8 until around age 13 for girls and 15 for boys. The source of the pain is usually the growth plate of the heel bone, a strip of soft tissue where new bone is forming to accommodate adolescents' lengthening feet. Overuse, repeated pounding or excessive force on the Achilles tendon can cause inflammation and pain.

For many teenagers, the growth plate has completely closed, and heel pain is caused by other conditions such as plantar fasciitis, tendonitis, bursitis, bone bruises or fractures.

The only way to know for sure what your child is suffering from is to have them examined. People have a tendency to give it time and see if the pain goes away on its own, and sometimes that can happen. But if symptoms persist, it's best to make an appointment with our office to make an accurate diagnosis and to avoid complications.



## Keep Your Ankles Safe from Fractures this Winter Season

Ice and snow can be beautiful to the eyes, but can play havoc on our feet and ankles. Ankle injuries increase during the winter months and it's important to have any injury examined to help prevent possible long-term complications from undiagnosed fractures.



Many people mistake ankle fractures for ankle sprains, especially if they are able to walk on the injured foot. The ability to walk on the foot is not a good test to determine a sprain versus a fracture because it is still possible to walk with less-severe injuries.

Mistaking an ankle fracture for an ankle sprain can have serious consequences when the foot does not heal correctly. An ankle fracture involves a crack or break in the bones that form the ankle joint. A sprain involves the ligaments that hold the ankle bones together. Both injuries can happen simultaneously when the ankle moves beyond its normal range of motion, but a fracture requires more complex treatment than a sprain.

### **Telltale signs of a fracture include:**

- ▶ Bruising
- ▶ Blisters
- ▶ Significant Swelling
- ▶ Bone Protrusion from the Skin

Those with undiagnosed fractures can have a higher risk of developing infection, arthritis and foot deformities that may make it impossible to walk normally again.

Don't let a fall keep you off your feet for too long; call our office right away if you suffer from an ankle or foot injury to make sure you receive a proper diagnosis and treatment.

# Keep Your Toes Toasty

Whether you're heading off to a snowy region this season or stepping into the elements just outside your door, make sure you're dressed appropriately for the weather. It's important to wear layers of warm clothes, but don't forget your feet. Keeping your feet warm helps prevent cold weather conditions, such as frostbite.

Frostbite is a condition that can occur when skin is exposed to extreme cold, resulting in tissue damage and possible tissue loss. Your fingers, toes and areas of commonly exposed skin like the nose and cheeks are at risk as well. In the foot, frostbite typically develops in stages beginning with cold toes that then turn bright red in color. The color in the toes continues to change and darkens into purples and blues and eventually black, indicating severe frostbite. If you have diabetic neuropathy, which causes loss of feeling in the foot, it is especially important you check your toes regularly for signs of frostbite.

Another symptom of frostbite is numbness in the toes; however, numb toes can also be a symptom of other conditions, such as tarsal tunnel syndrome, metatarsalgia and neuromas. Wearing tight shoes can also cause numbness in the toes.

If you are experiencing numbness in your toes, call our office to schedule an appointment. If you suspect the numbness is due to frostbite, suspect the numbness is due to frostbite, seek medical attention immediately.



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