

## What is Hallux Rigidus?

Hallux rigidus is a form of arthritic change involving the great toe joint (first metatarsophalangeal joint). It may occur as a result of previous trauma or secondary to a biomechanical abnormality of the motion of the joint. With time, the cartilage in the upper part of the joint tends to wear away because of rubbing (impingement) between the first metatarsal head (ball of the metatarsal) and the top of the base of the toe bone (proximal phalanx). As this wearing occurs, it causes a localized arthritis involving the upper part of the joint. Spurs can then form in the upper part of the joint. These spurs can limit motion and also cause pressure from the overlying shoe. Discomfort usually begins with high-demand activities that require a lot of bending of the great toe and also with shoes that have a tight-fitting toe box. With time, the arthritis can worsen and cause larger spurs on the top of the joint causing more problems with shoes and also pressure on the nerve going to the great toe, causing numbness. Also as the arthritis worsens, the up and down motion of the great toe becomes more limited. The arthritis with time can also involve the rest of the joint.

## Treatment

Initial treatment: Wearing shoes that have a high toe box so the spurs will not rub and also a stiff sole so the great toe joint does not have to bend as much when walking. Special shoe inserts can be made to limit the amount of motion of the great toe with walking and other activities of daily living. Anti-inflammatory medication (arthritis medication) can sometimes be helpful for acute increases in pain related to activity. Icing after activity can also be helpful.

If conservative (nonoperative) care is not giving you significant relief, then another option would be to consider surgical intervention. If the arthritis is still localized to the upper part of the great toe joint, removal of the spurs from both sides of the joint and removal of the upper one-third of the metatarsal head (cheilectomy), as well as possibly an osteotomy of the toe bone to cock the great toe upward slightly may be the best option. If the arthritis has involved more of the joint and is, therefore, not salvageable, other surgical options may include fusion of the first metatarsophalangeal joint or simple removal of the spurs if the spurs are causing the majority of the problem.

Your treatment options should be customized to your own personal situation. The options along with the potential risks and complications associated should be thoroughly discussed and your questions answered to your satisfaction.