

Pain in the ball of the foot

Pain in the ball of your foot is known as metatarsalgia. You can usually ease the pain yourself. But talk to your GP if it does not improve.

Easing pain in the ball of the foot

If you talk to your GP, they'll usually suggest you try these things:

Do

- ✓ rest and raise your foot when you can
- ✓ put an ice pack (or bag of frozen peas) in a towel on the painful area for up to 20 minutes every 2 to 3 hours
- ✓ wear wide comfortable shoes with a low heel and soft sole
- ✓ use soft insoles or pads you put in your shoes
- ✓ try to lose weight if you're overweight
- ✓ try regular gentle stretching exercises
- ✓ take paracetamol

Don't

- ✗ do not take ibuprofen for the first 48 hours after an injury
- ✗ do not walk or stand for long periods
- ✗ do not wear high heels or tight pointy shoes

Get advice from your GP before trying it, especially if:

- you have any concerns about your health
- you are not sure if the exercises are suitable
- you have any pre-existing health problems or injuries, or any current symptoms

Stop the exercise immediately and talk to your GP if you feel any pain or feel unwell.

Ask your pharmacist about:

- the best painkiller to take
- insoles and pads for your shoes
- treatments for common skin problems
- if you need to see a GP

When to contact your GP

Talk to your GP if:

- the pain is severe or stopping you from doing normal activities
- the pain is getting worse or keeps coming back
- the pain has not improved after treating it at home for 2 weeks
- you have any tingling or loss of sensation in your foot
- you have diabetes – foot problems can be more serious if you have diabetes

► [What we mean by severe pain](#)

Causes of pain in the ball of your foot

Common causes of pain in the ball of your foot are exercising too much or wearing shoes that are too tight.

Some people also have a foot shape that puts extra pressure on the ball of the foot. For example, if you have small curled-up toes (hammer toes) or high arches.

A stress fracture or certain types of arthritis can sometimes cause pain in the ball of the foot.

Your symptoms may help you find the cause of your foot pain.

Possible causes of pain in the ball of your foot

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Symptoms Pain, swelling, bruising, started after intense or repetitive exercise

Possible cause sprained metatarsal

Symptoms Sharp, burning or shooting pain near your toes (ball of your foot), feels like a lump or small stone under your foot

Possible cause Morton's neuroma

Symptoms Redness and swelling, dull aching pain

Possible cause bursitis or arthritis

Symptoms Hard bony lump near the big toe

Possible cause [bunions](#)

Don't worry if you're not sure what the problem is.

Follow the advice on this page and talk to your GP if the pain does not get better in 2 weeks.

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