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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome

Tarsal tunnel syndrome -- tarsal: meaning the lower ankle area of the foot -- is a condition that usually affects the inside aspect of the ankle. Tarsal tunnel syndrome is most common in active adults, but it can also occur in children. The pain, burning, or tingling sensation it causes is due to a compressed "posterior tibial nerve" as it courses under the ligament at the inside of the ankle. An analogy can be made between the nerve and a garden hose. If a hose is drawn around a sharp corner, tension is created at the point of the bend. If the hose is pulled even tighter, it kinks and the flow of water through it is restricted. If the hose is stepped on, the flow is reduced even further. In tarsal tunnel syndrome, the same types of forces are applied to the "posterior tibial nerve". Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome occurs when this nerve, as it courses under the ligament at the inside of the ankle, becomes inflamed, compressed, or irritated. This may occur for a variety of reasons, namely: excessive pronation (flat feet), arthritic problems, trauma (and old ankle fracture), and even obesity.



The symptoms that are characteristic of this problem is persistent unremitting burning pain at the inside of the ankle that does not subside even after weight has been removed from the foot. This pain often increases even more as the day progresses.

There is a simple test you can do to see how likely it is that you have tarsal tunnel syndrome. Simply tap above, below, and behind your inside ankle bone with your finger or a rubber reflex hammer. You do not have to tap very hard! If you feel a tingling or any pain, that can mean that you may have tarsal tunnel syndrome. In severe cases you may feel an electrical shock all the way to your big toe!

In our office conservative treatment is always attempted first. Custom made orthotics combined with wider shoes often make a significant difference. Using ice packs on the inflamed nerve, rest, and massaging the area may also help. Chiropractors will mobilize the neighbouring ankle/foot joints, as well as use modalities such as Interferential Current.

When conservative forms of treatment have been exhausted, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) may be prescribed. However, due to potentially severe gastrointestinal and cardiovascular side effects, NSAIDs should only be used as instructed. Steroid injections also may prove effective. If all else fails, surgical treatment may be necessary.