

## METATARSALGIA – NONOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT

**Information:** Metatarsalgia is a general term for pain in the forefoot. It is not a diagnosis, but it is a symptom. Patients with metatarsalgia present with pain in the ball of their foot and often feel like they have a pebble in their forefoot especially when they walk barefoot. The pain is typically at the base of the second or third toe, and patients may develop a callus in this area. Initially, nonoperative management may be pursued. The goal is to offload the area in the forefoot where there is pain.

### Metatarsal Pads

Metatarsal pads (Figure 1) help to offload the metatarsal heads that are involved. You can obtain metatarsal pads from Amazon by searching “metatarsal pads.” While a number of metatarsal pads may work, many patients prefer the “Hapad Metatarsal Pads.” The key to using a metatarsal pad is properly position the metatarsal pad in your shoe. The metatarsal pad should be placed behind the area of pain (closer to the heel). The metatarsal pad is NOT meant to cushion or pad the area. One way to ensure that you properly fit the metatarsal pad is to use lipstick or a marking pen to outline the area of pain on the forefoot. Remove the orthotic insert from your shoe and step on it. The mark from your lipstick or pen should transfer to the orthotic insert. Stick the metatarsal pad to the orthotic insert just behind (closer to the heel) the marked area where you pain is (Figure 2). You can then put the orthotic insert with the metatarsal pad into your shoe and try walking. You may need to make further adjustments to the metatarsal pad. For more information about fitting a metatarsal pad, visit [www.fooeducation.com/how-do-i-fit-a-metatarsal-pad/](http://www.fooeducation.com/how-do-i-fit-a-metatarsal-pad/).

Figure 1



Figure 2



Disclaimer: These are general statements and may not apply specifically to your care. I may modify as needed for your individual care.

### Calf / Achilles Stretching

Regular calf stretching may help to decrease the load on the forefoot and reduce symptoms. A tight calf contributes to overload of the forefoot. Daily stretching a few times per day can help to alleviate metatarsalgia. To perform Achilles stretching, place your hands against a wall for balance and step back with your affected leg (Figure 3). Keep the back knee / leg straight and your heel on the floor. Slowly press your hips forward and bend the forward leg. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times in one session. Try to do 3 sessions per day – morning, midday, and evening.



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