



HALLUX LIMITUS/ RIGIDUS





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Causes

Hallux limitus or hallux rigidus is a condition that affects the joint at the base of the big toe. Over time the toe becomes painful and stiff and becomes harder to move. The condition is a form of degenerative arthritis. In dancers the range of movement at the hallux can be troubling as it will inhibit our ability to rise onto the demi pointe as well as performing everyday activities such as walking and running.

Hallux limitus is the term used for reduced movement at the 1st metatarsophalangeal joint where Hallux Rigidus is where the movement is very limited. Because hallux rigidus is a progressive condition, the toe's motion decreases as time goes on. In its earlier stage, when motion of the big toe is only somewhat limited, the condition is called hallux limitus. But as the problem advances, the toe's range of motion gradually decreases until it potentially reaches the end stage of rigidus, in which the big toe becomes stiff or what is sometimes called a fused joint.

Common causes of hallux rigidus are biomechanics (incorrect functioning) and structural abnormalities of the foot that over time lead to wear and tear of the big toe joint. For example, people with flat feet or excessive pronation (rolling in) of the ankles are susceptible to developing hallux rigidus. In some people, hallux rigidus runs in the family and is a result of inheriting a foot type that is prone to developing this condition. In other cases, it is associated with overuse, and this is often seen with dancers with high demands placed on demi pointe work. Hallux rigidus can also result from an injury, such as stubbing your toe. In rare cases hallux rigidus may even be caused by inflammatory diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis or gout.



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Symptoms

Early signs and symptoms include:

- Pain and stiffness in the big toe during use
- Pain and stiffness aggravated by cold temperatures
- Difficulty with certain activities (especially rising onto the demi pointe)
- Swelling and inflammation around the joint

As the disorder gets more serious, additional symptoms may develop, including:

- Pain, even during rest
- Difficulty wearing shoes because bone spurs develop
- Dull pain in the hip, knee or lower back due to changes in the way you walk
- Limping (in severe cases)

Treatment

The sooner this condition is diagnosed, the easier it is to treat. Therefore, the best time to see your podiatrist is when you first notice symptoms. In diagnosing hallux rigidus, the podiatrist will examine your feet and determine the range of motion available in the toe. X-rays may be used to help to determine the extent of the degeneration and determine whether any bone spurs or abnormalities are present.

Treatment will vary depending on the severity of the condition but will likely involve a combination of the following therapies:

- Footwear modification
- Massage and mobilisation
- Anti Inflammatory medication
- Orthotics
- Injection therapy
- Surgery