

# FOOTNOTES 2004

NEWS YOU CAN USE FOR WINTER 2004

## Winter is the Season for Ankle Pains

Residents of the upper half of the country are well into the season of ice, snow and sleet...all of which can produce ankle injuries. Even those who don't live in the northern states can suffer sprains and fractures when playing indoor court sports or while vacationing in snow resort areas.

If you hurt your ankle, one of the first things you'll wonder is "is it broken or sprained?" The old adage 'if you can walk on it, it's not broken,' isn't always true. With a fracture, you may hear a sound when the injury occurs, and experience "pinpoint" pain at the site of the break.

When you experience an injury to your ankle, the first thing to do is apply ice and rest with the leg elevated. This helps to reduce pain and control swelling around the joint.

### Call Us If Pain Persists

No matter whether the injury is a sprain or a fracture, if it doesn't improve within a day or two, it's important to come into our office to have it evaluated and x-rayed. If not treated promptly, these injuries can cause further damage and chronic ankle problems. 🦶

## Big Toe Pain Should Not Be Ignored

The joint at the base of your big toe takes quite a beating every day. It has to bend with each step you take, gets jammed when you make quick stops or twisting motions during recreational activities, not to mention what happens to it when the foot is placed in the unnatural position required by spike-heeled shoes!

### It Can Only Get Worse!

Constant pain in your big toe joint could be a warning sign of a progressive, arthritic condition known as "hallux rigidus." "Hallux" refers to the big toe, while "rigidus" indicates that the toe is rigid and cannot move. In early stages, when movement is only somewhat restricted, it is sometimes called "hallux limitus." This joint stiffness gets worse over time, making it difficult for you to walk, stoop or even just stand for long periods of time.

This condition may run in the family, but it is also caused by repetitive stress from workplace or sports activities. Tradesmen who crouch and stoop a lot and avid golfers and tennis players are prone to getting hallux rigidus. It can also result from an injury, such as a severe stubbing of the big toe.

It's best to have your toe examined when you first notice pain while walking, standing, squatting, or bending over. If treated early, we can prevent or postpone the need for surgery. But if it progresses too far, surgery may be required to repair the damage from this painful condition. 🦶

### Take These Precautions to Avoid Winter Ankle Injuries

- \* Keep areas around outside doorways well lit so icy patches are visible
- \* Wear shoes or boots with a traction sole that can prevent slipping
- \* Check for slippery spots before getting out of a car
- \* Avoid wearing high-heeled shoes outdoors
- \* Stretch and warm up before recreational sports activities



# Now's the Time to Get Those Feet Ready for Spring!

Spring is on its way...and for most of us it can't come too soon! When it does arrive you'll want to be ready to enjoy all that it has to offer...without your feet slowing you down.

- \* If you've been putting off foot surgery, winter is a good time to get it done. You'll be recovered and your feet will be in fine shape to move you into the springtime activities you love!
- \* In most cases, bunions and hammertoes are corrected with outpatient surgery, and you're back home with a bandaged foot and postoperative shoe the same day. By the time you're ready to embark upon a spring fitness routine or to get back onto the golf course, your feet will be ready to take you there.

\* Outdoor winter sports can be hard on the feet, too. Snowboarders, in particular, are prone to experiencing foot or ankle injuries due to the flexible boots used in that sport. One injury common to snowboarders is the midfoot sprain, which can persist for months if not properly diagnosed and treated.

\* If you've been participating in court sports this winter and are experiencing foot pain, make an appointment to come in to our office to have it checked out. Indoor sports can be hard on the feet, sometimes resulting in stress fractures, Achilles tendon problems, plantar fascia injuries, or ankle

sprains. If pain persists more than a few days it needs to be treated.

\* Another injury we commonly see during the winter months is ankle sprain. Very often, those who sprain their ankle don't get the proper treatment, leading to an improperly healed ankle. This can result in long-term ankle instability and increases the risk for joint damage and eventual arthritis. If you've sprained your ankle this winter it's best to get it checked out before you become more active in the spring. Putting stress on an incompletely healed sprained ankle can lead to another even more serious sprain and chronic ankle weakness. 🦶

