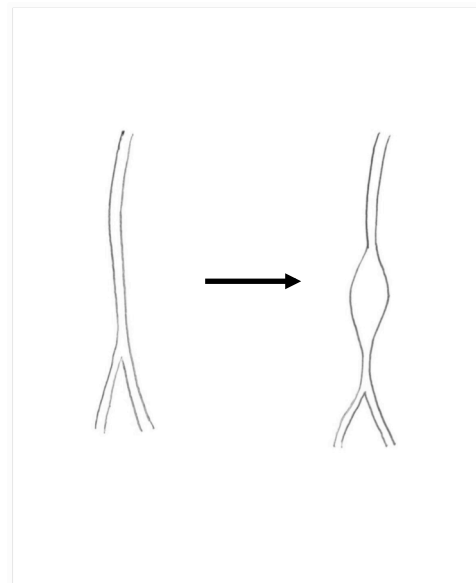
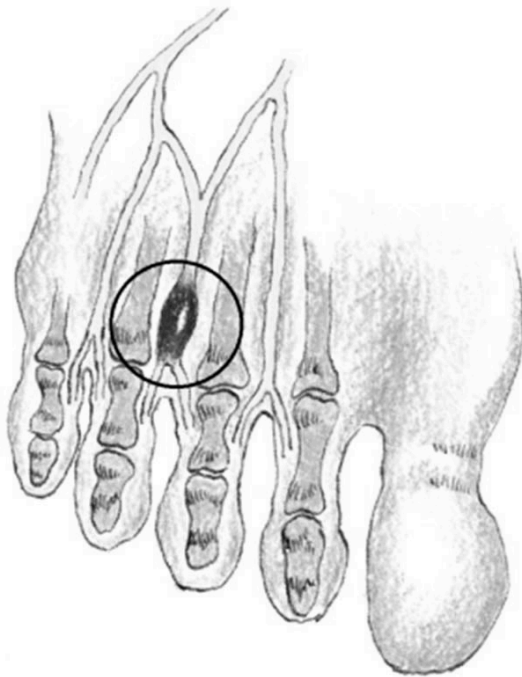


Dr Sarah Watts Morton's Neuroma

Definition "*Neuroma* – a new growth or a tumour of nerve cells and nerve fibres"

Morton's Neuroma is a thickening of one of the tiny digital nerves that pass between the toe bones (metatarsals). It is not cancer or a tumour – as its definition would suggest. The condition is due to irritation or pressure on this tiny nerve. The irritation and pressure causes the nerve to enlarge and swell. Instead of the nerve being stringy and long (like a noodle), it becomes puffed up and swollen.



Morton's neuroma usually happens between the third and fourth toe (70% of the time). Less frequently it can happen between the second and the third toe (30% of the time).

Symptoms

- The foot usually looks normal from the outside
- Burning or prickling pain between the toes. This usually gets worse with shoes (particular tight or high-heeled), and activity.
- Numbness and discomfort in the toes may occur.
- Some people feel like they are walking on a marble.

Diagnosis

Usually there are signs on examination that you might have a neuroma. There is often discomfort in the intermetatarsal space. It is uncommon to feel a mass or a click. Xray and ultrasound can help to make the diagnosis. An MRI is not usually needed, and is only used to rule out other potential causes of pain.

Non-surgical treatments

- Shoewear – wide comfortable shoes are the best. Shoes with a soft inner insole are ideal. Avoid high heels.
- Orthoses – a pre-metatarsal dome may be requested. This helps to lift and separate the toes, increasing the intermetatarsal space. This can be obtained from an orthotist or podiatrist.
- Guided HCLA injection – sometimes a guided injection of cortisone (HC) and local anaesthetic (LA) can help to settle symptoms. This is usually done by a radiologist, under ultrasound guidance. This ensures the injection is put in the correct place. The effects of the injection are temporary, but can provide several months of relief for an inflamed and irritated neuroma.

Surgery



If your symptoms don't improve with non-surgical treatment, surgery can be done for your condition.

Morton's neuroma surgery is an excision of the inflamed nerve. The incision is on the top of your foot. It is usually done under general anaesthetic, as a day surgery procedure.

During the surgery, the affected nerve is removed surgically. This will leave you with permanent numbness in the interspace between the toes. This numbness is well tolerated, and usually much less uncomfortable than the pain from the neuroma.



Area of numbness 3-4 neuroma

- The scarring from surgery is usually minimal, and measures approximately 4cm long
- Surgical dressings are in place for two weeks
- Full recovery from surgery takes up to 6 weeks
- Patients are able to weight bear as tolerated, post operatively
- Return to comfortable footwear occurs at two to three weeks