

Hallux Rigidus

Hallux rigidus is a form of degenerative arthritis affecting the large joint at the base part of the big toe. This form of arthritis is often the result of wear-and-tear on the surface of the joint that occurs over time. The condition may accompany an injury to the joint, or in the majority of instances, it can arise without having any known injury at all.

Many people believe that the condition starts with an injury to the cartilage lining within the joint, such as from stubbing the toe. This particular injury can set the degenerative process in motion that can last for years at a time before any symptoms occur needing treatment.

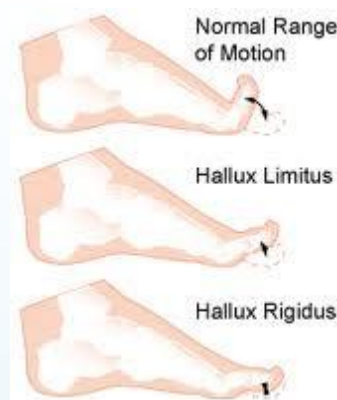
Even though the condition can occur in younger individuals, it often affects those who are older than 50 years of age. Women tend to develop the condition more often than men do. It may also be linked to a hereditary factor since 2/3 of all individuals have someone in the family with the same condition. For those who have a family member with the condition, they often find hallux rigidus in both feet.

If you bend your big toe, it should be able to bend about 65-85 degrees. However, a hallux rigidus could be anywhere around the 30 degree mark.

Hallux Rigidus Anatomy

The joint that lies at the base part of the big toe is often known as the metatarsophalangeal joint. Just like any other joint within the body, it is covered with an articular cartilage, which is a slick, shiny covering that lies on the end part of the bone. If that material becomes injured, it can begin degenerating. The articular surface will end up wearing away until the raw bone is rubbing against the other bone.

Bone spurs will form around the joint in the process, which will end up restricting the motion within the joint, especially when it comes to being able to bend the big toe upward whenever the foot moves.



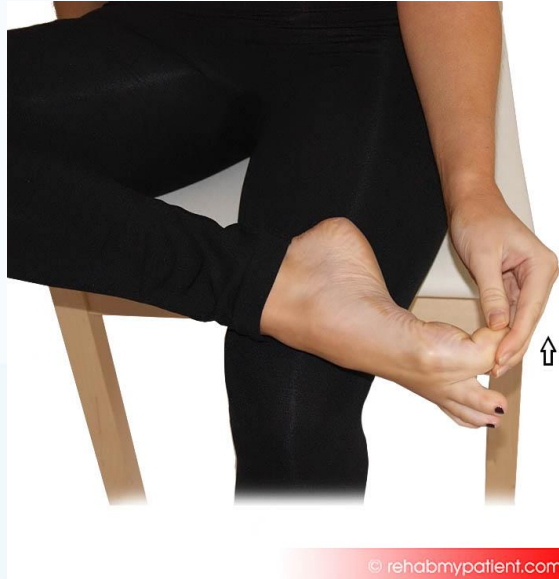
How to Treat Hallux Rigidus:

1. Anti-Inflammatory Medication

By taking an anti-inflammatory medication, you can help to control the pain, heat, swelling and redness that accompanies degenerative arthritis. As anti-inflammatories are rarely a long term solution, other options should be explored.

2. Manual Therapy

Manual therapy such as physiotherapy, chiropractic or osteopathy is one of the most useful forms of treatment. Your Rehab My Patient therapist will most likely mobilize your big toe joint, as well as other stiff joints in the foot. This will help alleviate pressure to the big toe and improve force dissipation through the foot. Your RMP therapist will also prescribe exercises for you to help improve your big toe range of movement, if required.



3. Special Shoes

Using a special shoe will help to reduce the amount of bend you have in the toe when walking, which helps to improve the symptoms in the early stages of the condition. A rocker type sole will allow the shoe to take part of the bending force. It might also be combined with a metal brace within the sole to help limit the amount of flexibility in the sole of the shoe and reduce any motions needed for the MTP joint.

Tips:

- Avoid wearing shoes with a high heel.
- Bone spurs developing along with this condition can place undue amounts of pressure on the surrounding nerves, which can cause numbness in the big toe. Bone spurs and osteophytes also reduce range of mobility in the big toe.
- When you don't have the ability for the MTP joint to roll through a complete step, it can become difficult and painful to walk.
- Cortisone injections can help to provide you with a temporary form of pain relief.
- If you find that you are having difficulty walking, you need to consult with a professional who can properly diagnose your condition and provide you with treatment options.