



## PERSONAL MESSAGE

# if the Shoe Fits... The First Step in Avoiding Foot Injuries

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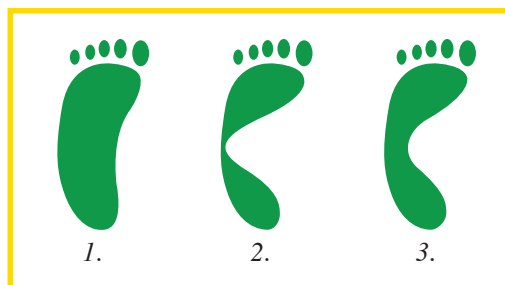
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Injuries to the feet from walking and running are often categorized as “overuse” injuries. “Overuse” implies that the injury develops gradually as a result of changes in intensity or duration of activity (faster pace or longer distance). Simply put, when you hear the term “overuse” in conjunction with foot and ankle pain, you know that the body is rejecting the level of stress acting upon it. So, how can the average person avoid overuse injuries to the feet?

A critical component to avoiding an overuse injury is to find and wear the right shoe. This can be a little challenging at first because the correct shoe must fit the shape of your foot, provide control for any abnormal motion your foot makes and finally, support your foot type. When all of these factors are addressed, non-traumatic overuse injuries decrease significantly. The key to finding the right shoe is to know more about your feet and a good place to get this information is from your physical therapist.

One way to identify your foot type is to look at your wet footprint on the sidewalk. Notice the difference between the three footprints below.



The three basic foot types are:

1. Pronated – this is the “flat foot” in which the arch is collapsed down.
2. Supinated – this is the “high arched” foot which is very stiff and rigid.
3. Neutral – this is the more ideal foot, with normal arch height.

Once you have a basic idea of your foot type, you can begin to understand the role that your shoes should play in supporting you and your activities. A simple biomechanical explanation of these three foot types are as follows: The pronated foot is too loose and mobile and is in need of extra stability or support. The supinated foot is too rigid and lacks mobility, and thus it needs more shock absorption. The neutral foot, as the name implies, does not need extra support or extra shock absorption built into the shoe.

The final step is purchasing a shoe based on the principles described above. It is critical that you use a store with staff who thoroughly understand the various shoes designed for pronators, supinators, and those with neutral feet. For a recommendation on where to get the best service and shoes for you, contact our office.



Bruce Snell—Owner, NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc.

# FOOT AND ANKLE PAIN

## physical therapy solutions



Physical therapists understand the dynamic mechanics and cooperation that must occur between the 26 bones, 33 joints, and more than 100 muscles, ligaments and nerves in the foot and ankle.

Foot and ankle pain is a frequent complaint in people of all ages and activity levels. Traumatic injuries, such as sprained ankles or broken bones, require obvious medical attention and appropriate rehab. However many people experience pain on a daily basis that is not related to trauma or a one-time injury. These include diagnoses such as plantar fasciitis, tendinitis, metatarsalgia, heel or arch pain, achilles tendinitis, neuroma and shin splints. Many people who suffer with foot & ankle pain are unaware of the unique benefits that are available through physical therapy. Physical therapy (PT) plays a significant role in the process of identifying the causes of pain, implementing customized treatment plans, and establishing strategies to prevent future episodes. The key here is that physical therapists can identify the *cause* of pain, and develop an individualized program that gets you back on your feet!

Physical therapists understand the dynamic mechanics and cooperation that must occur between the 26 bones, 33 joints, and more than 100 muscles, ligaments and nerves in the foot and ankle to perform two key functions. The first function of the feet is to provide shock absorption for body weight under the forces of gravity. The second function of the feet is propulsion or moving the body forward. Achieving these two functions require the feet to become mobile and adaptable while they transform into stable levers from which to push off from during walking. It's one of the body's great oxymorons: stay flexible and mobile while becoming stable. It's no wonder most foot and ankle injuries and painful conditions can be traced to an inability of the body

to perform or transition between these two key functions of shock absorption and stable lever.

Treatment of foot and ankle pain centers on an initial biomechanical evaluation that includes a detailed history and thorough hands-on physical examination. Playing "detective", a PT will find both obvious and subtle clues that are contributors to the abnormal forces acting on your feet. A critical aspect unique to physical therapy is that a PT will assess not only the feet and ankles, but also look for other

problems going on higher up in the knees, hips, pelvis and on the opposite side of your body. Patients are typically surprised, but relieved, when all of the clues add up and finally make sense to them.

Implementing treatment strategies for foot pain can involve immediate pain-relieving techniques to calm down inflammation or swelling. In addition to the use of modalities (ultrasound, electrical stimulation, iontophoresis) there are a number of exciting new

hands-on therapy techniques that can offer quick relief of pain. In some cases, making small changes in the shoes or insoles helps the feet perform their duties efficiently and effectively. Depending on the diagnosis, there can also be a need for stretching, strengthening, and movement retraining. Since the human body is the master at compensation, retraining a normal walking gait becomes a necessary part of preventing long-term problems and recurrences. The key is always to empower the patient in the healing process through education and the development of an individualized wellness plan.



# Tips and Tricks

## TIPS FOR HEALTHIER FEET

Your feet are your foundation, to keep them healthier and happier you should:



1. Buy shoes based on function, not simply fashion. Going for the cheapest pair of shoes or simply for style can lead to trouble. Take the time to find good quality shoes that can meet the demands that your work and activities require.

2. Utilize running shoes for more than just running. Around home, running errands or when traveling, consider using your running shoes for those long periods of walking and standing. Correctly fit running shoes can decrease the compressive forces on your feet and also take stress off the knees, hips and back.



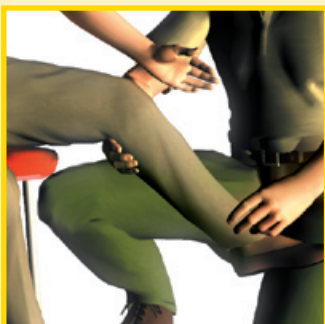
3. Get the correct type of shoe for your activity or sport. Avoid using a generic sneaker for your daily walks or for a sport they are not intended for. Running shoes may be fine for running and walking, but they are not appropriate for use with court sports and many other activities which require more side to side stability.

4. Give your feet the exercise they deserve. Unlike some other joints and muscles in the body, your feet are working hard to support you even when you are simply standing still doing simple daily functions. Take the time to learn some basic stretches and exercises which can diminish the stress that your feet acquire every day.



5. Perform a little "TLC Rollout". After a long day on your feet, sit down and place a small ball (the size of a golf ball, but preferably softer) under your foot. Gently roll your foot back and forth over the ball to massage various areas. Curl your toes down, up and apart periodically as you roll out some of the day's stress.

6. Always remember the joints and muscles above. While your feet are your foundation, they are also reactive to your body's constantly changing center of gravity. Imbalances at the hips, pelvis and spine will often cause unbalanced forces to act on your feet and can be the root cause for many foot and ankle problems.



7. Don't be afraid to consult with professionals who are foot/ankle specialists. The mechanics of the foot and ankle are incredibly complex. When seeking help, find a medical professional or therapist who is qualified to accurately diagnose your problem and develop a customized plan for recovery.

# FAQ

**I have sharp pain in my heel first thing in the morning. Can physical therapy help with that?**

Sharp pain in the heel or arch experienced when you first bear weight in the morning can be a sign of plantar fasciitis. This is an inflammation of the connective tissue layering that runs across the bottom of your foot and attaches to the bottom of your heel. YES, this condition is very commonly treated in physical therapy with great success!

**I work on my feet all day and my feet ache consistently. Is there a specific shoe that I should be wearing?**

First, it would be important to know if your job has a requirement that must be met such as steel-toe protection or certain style (dress shoes vs. casual). Your shoes should meet two criteria: 1) They should provide adequate support and stability for the back half of your feet while not being too tight around the front half and toes, and 2) they should offer proper cushioning and shock absorption. A physical therapist can help you make good footwear choices that support your foot type and address workplace criteria.

**What are the key aspects to recovering from an ankle sprain?**

There should be an appropriate “rest period” after a sprained ankle, which may include immobilization or use of crutches. However, once this period is over it is critical that you regain the following: 1) Full range of motion in the foot and ankle joints; 2) Full strength in not only the foot and ankle but the entire leg; 3) Stability to balance on a single leg on a variety of uneven or unstable surfaces; 4) A normal, non-compensated walking pattern. Being proactive is the key to recovery.

**I have flat feet. Does that mean that I need “arch supports” or custom orthotics?**

Flat feet alone are not necessarily an indicator of a “bad” foot that requires special insoles or orthotics. What is more important is your foot’s dynamic function, which means its ability to be a shock absorber as you land, and a stable base to propel from when you push off during the walking cycle. Ask your physical therapist about your foot type and foot dynamics before buying expensive orthotics!

## Do you need to see a Physical Therapist for your foot pain? Take this simple test...

**Less than 2 Yes:**

You’re not in big trouble yet, but should pay attention to any discomfort. By scheduling a free consultation with a physical therapist you will learn more about your foot type and foot dynamics and quite possibly avoid future foot problems.

**Between 2 and 4 Yes:**

Physical Therapy could definitely be an option for you, beginning with a thorough evaluation to uncover the root causes of your pain.

**Between 5 and 7 Yes:**

We would advise you to see a podiatrist

(foot doctor) or a physical therapist as soon as possible. Look for a health professional interested in discovering the root cause of your foot pain. Do not settle for health professionals that only address foot pain symptoms.

YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have sharp pain in my heel/arch when I first walk in the morning or after a period of sitting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am unable to walk for exercise or participate in my normal sports because it will aggravate my foot pain.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I experience muscle cramping and pain in my feet at the end of the day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	My foot pain has persisted for more than 6 weeks despite my own efforts to “let it heal.”
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I suffer from unexplained knee pain or back pain.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I regularly experience numbness or tingling in my feet.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I cannot find comfortable shoes.



## Featured Physical Therapist

### Laura Opstedal, DPT, OCS, CSCS



Laura is a Tacoma native and has been a physical therapist with NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc. for six years. She is a graduate from University of Puget Sound with a Bachelor's of Science in biology/math and a Master's in Physical Therapy. She later completed requirements for a Doctorate in Physical Therapy from UPS. Laura is an Orthopaedics Clinical Specialist, awarded by the American Physical Therapy Association, and a Certified Strength & Conditioning Specialist.

Laura loves education and has taken numerous manual therapy courses. She also enjoys teaching and is a clinical instructor for the University of Puget Sound. While interested in all areas of orthopaedics, she especially loves working with high school athletes and has a particular interest in sacroiliac joint/hip problems.

Laura and her husband, Chris, spend weekends working on home improvements, gardening, and playing with their Saint Bernard and Shih Tzu. She also continues to play softball with old friends from her high school fast pitch team every spring.

## What's happening at our family of clinics....

### Tacoma Clinic:

Troy will be running his second marathon, the "San Diego Rock N' Roll", June 3rd with his wife, Tara.

Craig, will be amongst a few other's that will be running in the first annual Tacoma City Marathon, ½ Marathon and 10k race on Sunday, May 13th.

Our billing manager, Bridget celebrated her 40th birthday in January.

Tim has now been with NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc. for 20 years!! WOW! He continues with his athletic training at Charles Wright Academy completing his 17th year.

### Women's Clinic:

Our very own Anna T. will be participating in the 111th running of the Boston Marathon on Monday, April 16th. Please feel free to call and wish her luck! GO ANNA!

The Women's Clinic is now opened Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 8:00am until 6:30pm. We are currently closed on Thursdays until further notice.

### Gig Harbor Clinic:

NW Hand Therapy joins Relay For Life. The hand group is excited about being a part of the American Cancer Society's Relay For Life on June 1st and 2nd at Mt. Tahoma High School in Tacoma. This is a 24-hour fundraising event that is fun, inspiring, and well worth it. If you would like to donate and help "Team Handy" raise money, you can go to [www.tacomarelay.org](http://www.tacomarelay.org), go to the team rank box on the right and click on more, type in Team Handy where it asks for team name, then click on the purple Team Handy. Thank you so much for your support with Team Handy's efforts to help raise money for the American Cancer Society.

**Community Involvement:** (Please check our website for all update information)

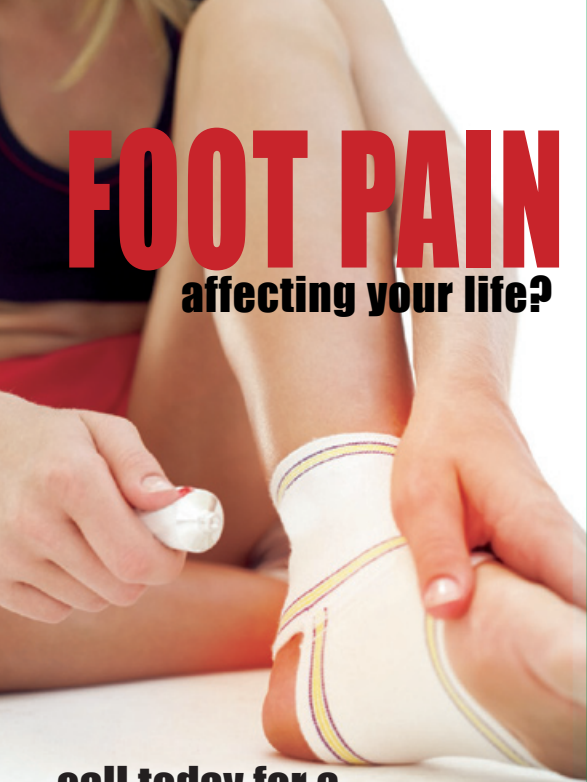
On Saturday, April 7th NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc. will once again participate in Gig Harbors Health & Safety Expo. Please come join us!

On Friday, May 11th and Saturday, May 12th NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc. will be hosting a booth at the first annual Tacoma City Marathon. NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc. is the official Physical Therapy Sponsor! The Marathon, ½ Marathon and 10k race will take place Sunday, May 13th. Come visit our booth to just say hi!

NW Women's Physical Therapy will host its 2nd annual "Stroll for Strong Bones" walk along Gig Harbor's Cushman Trail on Saturday, July 14th. All proceeds will go to the National Osteoporosis Foundation. Please come join us!

# FOOT PAIN

affecting your life?



**NW SPORTS**  
PHYSICAL THERAPY, INC.

Caring about *you* is our business at **NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc.** Our Tacoma and Gig Harbor clinics provide physical therapy for a wide variety of conditions. We use a number of methods to decrease your pain, improve your mobility and make you stronger, healthier and happier.

The feeling you get here is one of caring, helpful staff in a friendly environment, assisting you in your desire to become more active or return to work or play.

NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc. also has two other clinics which focus

on specific areas of concern. First, **NW Hand Therapy** specializes in the treatment of hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder problems. We have five hand therapists, two of which are Certified Hand Therapists to serve your needs.

Second is our newest specialty area, **NW Women's Physical Therapy.** This clinic is dedicated exclusively to women's health and wellness. We have the ability to care for issues specific to women, in a warm, friendly environment. Our experienced therapists treat issues such as bladder and bowel incontinence, osteoporosis, pelvic floor pain and fibromyalgia.

call today for a  
**FREE CONSULTATION**

Find out if physical therapy can help you ease the pain and help you gain a new outlook on life.

**Gig Harbor (253) 851-7472**  
**Tacoma (253) 552-2525**

## WE CARE ABOUT YOU!

Call us today for a **FREE** consultation at

NW Sports Physical Therapy, Inc  
**Gig Harbor (253) 851-7472**  
**Tacoma (253) 552-2525**

NW Hand Therapy  
**Gig Harbor (253) 851-7472**  
**Tacoma (253) 428-8292**

NW Women's Physical Therapy  
**(253) 851-7277**  
[www.nwsportspt.com](http://www.nwsportspt.com)

## The First Step in Avoiding Foot Injuries if the Shoe Fits...

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