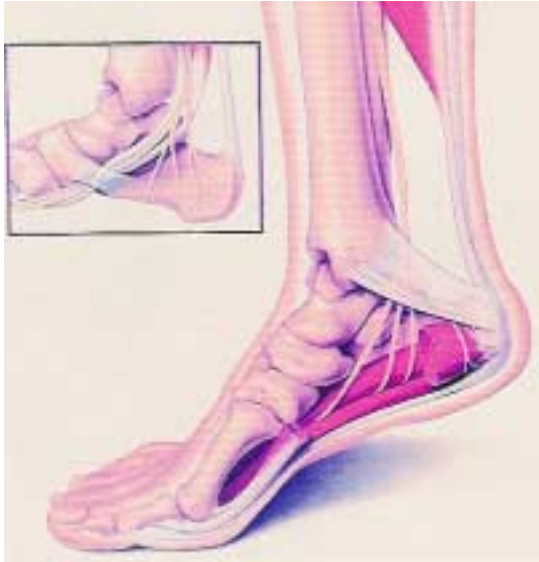


Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome

The Center for Orthopedic Surgery



Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome results from impingement of the Tibial Nerve as it courses behind the ankle. It commonly results in a burning or tingling pain, and occasionally numbness on the side of the heel and the bottom of the foot. It can begin rather suddenly, but most often starts gradually. It usually starts without any known trauma. However, after an ankle fracture or sprain, it might develop secondary to scar tissue crowding out the nerve in the tarsal tunnel.

Tarsal Tunnel

The tibial nerve runs deep to the lacinate ligament before dividing into 4 or 5 branches.

Treatment

Conservative treatment begins with limiting vigorous activity and limiting the amount of time spent on your feet. Comfortable, supportive shoes are a must. Anti-inflammatories may be tried if you do not have any contraindication to taking them. Occasionally a steroid injection may be indicated to reduce swelling and inflammation in the area. If the treatments do not suffice, a walking cast is applied to provide maximum support and rest, while reducing the forces traveling through the ankle.

If conservative treatment fails, then a tarsal tunnel release is the surgical procedure of choice. This involves releasing the strong band of tissue that lies on top of the tibial nerve, and making sure that the nerve travels freely from the leg into the foot. Following this procedure, you will need to use crutches for 1 month, not putting any weight on the involved foot. The following month is spent gradually transitioning out of a cast boot, and then physical therapy is instituted. The vast majority of patients in my experience notice a remarkable improvement in their symptoms, although for some it may take 4 to 6 months to begin to realize the most improvement. Some patients do not experience complete relief, but rarely are patients worse after the procedure.