

Turf Toe

Explanation of Diagnosis

Turf toe is a **sprain of the big toe joint (metatarsophalangeal joint)** caused by **forceful hyperextension (bending backward) of the toe**. It commonly occurs in **athletes playing on artificial turf**, but can also result from **sudden stops, pivots, or jumping motions**. Symptoms include **pain, swelling, stiffness, and difficulty pushing off while walking or running**.

Specific Work Modifications

- **Avoid prolonged standing, walking, or weight-bearing on the affected foot.**
- **Wear a stiff-soled or carbon fiber insert shoe** to prevent excessive toe bending.
- **If needed, use crutches or a walking boot** to reduce strain on the toe.
- **Modify tasks** to allow seated work or limit foot stress.
- **Apply ice and elevate the foot during breaks** to reduce swelling.

Specific Activity Modifications

- **Avoid high-impact activities** such as running, jumping, or sports that require quick direction changes.
- **Modify workouts** by switching to **low-impact exercises** such as swimming or cycling.
- **Use taping or a turf toe brace** when returning to activity.
- **Gradually reintroduce movement** as pain and swelling improve.

Recommended Supplements

- **Collagen peptides (10 g daily)** - Supports ligament and joint healing.
- **Vitamin C (500 mg daily)** - Aids in collagen synthesis for tissue repair.
- **Magnesium (300-400 mg daily)** - Helps muscle relaxation and recovery.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids (1000 mg daily)** - Reduces joint inflammation.
- **Turmeric (500 mg twice daily)** - Provides natural anti-inflammatory benefits.

Recommended Nutrition and Hydration

Diet Recommendations:

- **Anti-inflammatory foods:** Fatty fish (salmon, sardines), turmeric, berries, nuts, and leafy greens.
- **Collagen-boosting foods:** Bone broth, citrus fruits, and bell peppers.
- **Protein-rich foods:** Chicken, eggs, lentils, and dairy to support ligament healing.

- **Limit processed foods, sugar, and alcohol**, which can worsen inflammation.

Hydration Tips:

- **Drink at least 2-3 liters of water daily** to maintain tissue hydration.
- **Limit caffeine and alcohol**, which can slow healing.

Home Exercise Prescription

⚠ **Rest and limit motion initially; once pain decreases, start mobility and strengthening exercises.**

Phase 1: Early Recovery (Days 1-7, Reduce Swelling & Pain)

1. **Toe Taping or Splinting**
 - Use **turf toe taping technique** to restrict movement and support healing.
2. **Toe Range of Motion (Gentle)**
 - Slowly bend and straighten the big toe without force.
 - **10 reps, 2-3 times daily.**
3. **Ice & Elevation**
 - Apply **ice for 15-20 minutes, 3-4 times daily** to reduce swelling.

Phase 2: Strength & Mobility (After Pain Improves, 1-2 Weeks In)

4. **Toe Flexor Stretch**
 - Pull the big toe downward **gently** to stretch the joint.
 - **Hold for 20-30 seconds, repeat 3 times.**
5. **Toe Towel Scrunches (Arch & Toe Strengthening)**
 - Place a towel under your foot and scrunch it toward you using your toes.
 - **10 reps, 2 times daily.**
6. **Seated Heel Raises (Once Pain Allows)**
 - Sit in a chair and lift your heels off the ground, engaging the toe muscles.
 - **10 reps, 2-3 times daily.**

Phase 3: Return to Activity (Once Pain is Minimal, 3+ Weeks In)

7. **Standing Heel Raises**
 - Stand and slowly raise onto your toes, then lower.
 - **10 reps, 2 times daily.**
8. **Single-Leg Balance Exercise**
 - Stand on the affected foot for **15-30 seconds**, increasing time as tolerated.

- Repeat 2-3 times per leg.

⚠ **Avoid running, jumping, or pushing off forcefully until fully healed (typically 3-6 weeks).**

Helpful Books

1. *"Sports Injuries Guidebook"* - Robert Gotlin, DO
2. *"The Healthy Athlete's Guide to Injury Recovery"* - Jordan Metzl, MD

Click here for more orthopedic patient information.

Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.