Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome

Burning, tingling sole of the foot

Tips from your podiatrist at Ace Sports Medicine

ACE SPORTS MEDICINE
UPPER MOUNT GRAVATT

The tibial nerve runs through a narrow tunnel behind the inside ankle bone on its way to the sole. When the tunnel is crowded, the nerve is compressed and the sole burns, tingles or goes numb. It is often mistaken for plantar fasciitis.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT TARSAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

1 WHAT IT IS

Compression of the tibial nerve in the tunnel behind the inside ankle bone. The foot's version of carpal tunnel syndrome, and considerably less common.

A NERVE PROBLEM, NOT A FASCIA PROBLEM.

2 WHO GETS IT

Women are about 3 times more likely than men. Peak onset is between 40 and 60, and 17 to 43 percent of people report a previous ankle sprain or fracture.

OFTEN AFTER AN OLD ANKLE INJURY.

3 A FINDABLE CAUSE

In about 80 percent of cases the cause can be identified: a foot that rolls in, swelling, a cyst, varicose veins, footwear, diabetes or inflammatory arthritis.

RARELY JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS.

4 NERVE OR FASCIA

Burning, tingling or numb sensations in the arch and sole, worse after standing and at night, tender behind the ankle bone rather than under the heel.

FASCIA ACHES. NERVES BURN AND TINGLE.

5 THE TESTS

A gentle tap over the tunnel that sends tingling into the sole, and holding the foot up and out for ten seconds, which reproduces symptoms in about 82 percent of people with the condition.

DIAGNOSED IN THE ROOM, NOT ON A SCAN.

6 WHAT HELPS

Supportive footwear or an orthosis, arch strength, calf stretches and nerve glides. In a 2026 study, 65 percent of conservatively treated feet had a satisfactory outcome at five years.

CONSERVATIVE CARE FIRST.

PLANTAR FASCIITIS THAT NEVER GOT BETTER?

Heel pain from the fascia is a sharp first-step pain that eases as you warm up. Tarsal tunnel symptoms build with time on your feet, burn or tingle, and intrude at night. The two can coexist, which is why the assessment looks at both.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

- Burning, tingling or numb sole or arch
- Symptoms that build with standing and disturb sleep
- Fasciitis treatment that has not helped
- Tenderness behind the inside ankle bone
- A rolling arch, flat feet or an old ankle injury
- Toe weakness or spreading numbness

Weakness in the toes or a change in the shape of the foot should be assessed promptly.

WHAT CAN A PODIATRIST DO?

- Test the nerve and separate it from fascia pain
- Look for the cause: arch, footwear, swelling
- Fit supportive footwear or an orthosis
- Prescribe arch strength and calf stretches
- Teach nerve-gliding exercises
- Liaise with your GP on medication or imaging if needed

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

If the sole of your foot burns or tingles:

- **Wear supportive shoes**
- **Reduce long standing**
- **Note your triggers**
- **Book a podiatry assessment**

This is general information. Please discuss specifics at an appointment.

Helping You Perform at Your Best

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Need support with burning or tingling feet?

Book your appointment today

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