

Toe and Metatarsal Fractures (Broken toes)

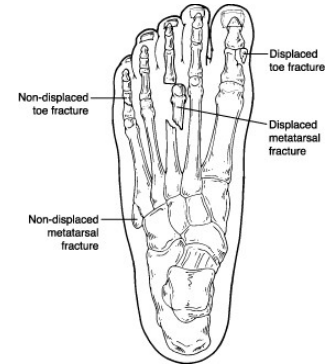
The structure of your foot is complex, consisting of bones, muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues. Of the 26 bones in your foot, 19 are toe bones (phalanges) and metatarsal bones (the long bones in the midfoot). Fractures of the toe and metatarsal bones (broken toes) are common and require evaluation by a specialist. A foot and ankle surgeon should be seen for proper diagnosis and treatment, even if initial treatment has been received in an emergency room.

What is a Fracture?

A fracture is a break in the bone. Fractures can be divided into **two** categories.

1.) Traumatic Fractures

Traumatic fractures (also called acute fractures) are caused by a direct blow or impact (like seriously stubbing your toe). Traumatic fractures can be displaced or non-displaced. If the fracture is displaced, the bone is broken in such a way that it has changed in position (dislocated). Treatment of a traumatic fracture depends on the location and extent of the break and whether it is displaced. Surgery is sometimes required.



Signs and symptoms of a traumatic fracture include:

- You may hear a sound at the time of the break.
- Deviation (mis-shapen or abnormal appearance) of the toe.
- "Pinpoint pain"
- Bruising and swelling

It is not true that "if you can walk on it, it's not broken." Evaluation by the foot and ankle surgeon is always recommended.

2.) Stress Fractures

Stress fractures are tiny, hairline breaks that are usually caused by repetitive stress. Stress fractures often afflict athletes who, for example, too rapidly increase their running mileage. Or they may be caused by an abnormal foot structure, deformities, or osteoporosis. Improper footwear may also lead to stress fractures. Symptoms of stress fractures include:

- Pain with or after normal activity
- "Pinpoint pain"
- Swelling, but no bruising
- Pain that goes away when resting and then returns when standing or during activity

Treatment of Toe Fractures

Fractures of the toe bones are almost always traumatic fractures. Treatment for traumatic fractures depends on the break itself and may include these options:

- Rest
- Rigid or Stiff-Soled Shoe
- Surgery: If the break is badly displaced or if the joint is affected, surgery may be necessary. Surgery often involves the use of fixation devices, such as pins.
- Splinting: Splint to keep in a fixed position.
- "Buddy Taping"

Treatment of Metatarsal Fractures

Treatment of metatarsal fractures depends on the type and extent of the fracture, and may include:

- Rest
- Immobilization, Casting or Rigid Shoe
- Surgery: Some traumatic fractures of the metatarsal bones require surgery, especially if the break is badly displaced.
- Avoid the Offending Activity