



# Feet don't fail me now!



By: Terry Matthews, D.O.

About this time of year, our clinic sees a dramatic increase in patients with foot and ankle injuries. Spring arrives, and that itch to get back into outdoor activities all too frequently leads to sprains and breaks. In fact, sprained ankles are so common that approximately 23,000 people PER DAY in the U.S. seek treatment for this injury.

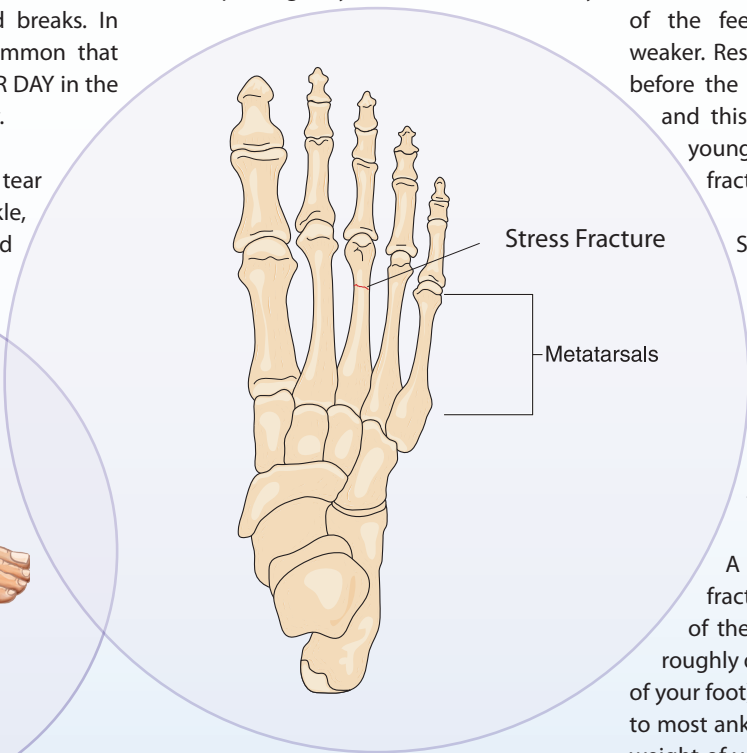
An ankle sprain is a stretch or tear of the ligaments of the ankle, which connect bone to bone and



stabilize the ankle joint. There are differing degrees of ankle sprain, and most recover with simple, conservative measures of rest, ice, compression and elevation for 2-3 weeks.

However, the more severe injuries often benefit from physical therapy, and in severe cases, surgery is occasionally necessary. In some cases, sprains are complicated by

fractures of the fibula (the bump on the outer aspect of your ankle). A good rule of thumb is that if you've rolled the ankle and you're not improving, if you're left with difficulty



bearing weight, or there's tenderness at the outer ankle, then a medical evaluation with X-Ray is definitely recommended.

Another common spring/summer complaint is a persistent ache, usually located in the mid-foot (between the ankle and toes). The ache generally worsens with weight bearing and walking. While there's often no

complaint of injury, there is usually a history of recently increased activity – running, basketball, soccer, etc. During roughly the first 2 weeks of increased activity, the bones of the feet actually become somewhat weaker. Resorption of bony minerals occurs before the bones strengthen from activity, and this leaves people – especially the young athlete – susceptible to stress fractures.

Stress fractures are mild cracks, often in the metatarsal bones of the feet (the long bones above the arch of the foot). These fractures generally require little more than a special shoe (and removing oneself from the repetitive stress), and they typically heal well.

A special class of metatarsal fracture exists: a fracture to the base of the 5<sup>th</sup> metatarsal bone (the bump roughly dead center along the outer edge of your foot). During the process which leads to most ankle sprains (a rolled ankle), all the weight of your body may land on this bone, resulting in fracture. This is why evaluation of your foot is crucial after any ankle injury. If you experience pain here, absolutely get an X-Ray of your foot. Fractures in this area sometimes heal poorly, and orthopedic referral may be necessary.

Lastly, toenail injuries top our summertime foot injury list. We're all guilty of wearing flip-flops or open toe sandals while riding



A common myth is that if you can move it or walk on your foot, then it's not broken. Many patients with complex fractures have come to our clinic walking under their own power.

The take home is this: Ramp up your workouts (and the punishment your feet are subjected to) slowly. Always wear shoes that offer you the greatest protection for your chosen activity. Failure to do so may increase your risk of an injury, which could take you out of the game for weeks

(if not months). A great local resource for education and guidance about proper footwear can be found through Playmakers on Grand River in Okemos.

[www.playmakers.com](http://www.playmakers.com)

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**About Dr. Terry Matthews**

Dr. Terry Matthews graduated from MSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine and pursued a career in Urgent Care and Family Practice. His passion for providing health care in an environment that is focused on the total patient experience coupled with his determination to provide the highest level of care in an urgent care setting is today known as Lansing Urgent Care. Dr. Matthews and his wife, Catherine, want to thank the Greater Lansing area for welcoming them and supporting their desire to provide a new level of Urgent Care to patients.

**At a Glance:**

- An ankle sprain is a stretch or tear of the ligaments of the ankle, which connect bone to bone and stabilize the ankle joint.
- Stress fractures are mild cracks, often in the metatarsal bones of the feet (the long bones above the arch of the foot).
- Foot protection (closed toe) can prevent virtually all of these very painful foot and toenail injuries.

a bike or hiking. Countless toenails have been summarily removed while pedaling or falling from a bike. Foreign objects can easily make their way into the foot through the open toe of a sandal. Foot protection (closed toe) can prevent virtually all of these very painful foot and toenail injuries.

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