



# FOOT SENSE

A monthly newsletter from your podiatrist



Dr. Rion Berg

April 2026

## Don't Confuse These 6 Common Foot Conditions

Foot pain can be frustrating—especially when it lingers or keeps coming back. One possible explanation? Several foot and ankle conditions have similar symptoms, even though they have completely different causes.

That matters, because the right diagnosis leads to the right treatment—and faster relief.

Below are three sets of commonly confused conditions we see in our office. If you've been dealing with foot pain, this can help you better understand what your body may be telling you.

### Heel Pain: Plantar Fasciitis vs. Fat Pad Atrophy

When most people think about heel pain, they assume it's plantar fasciitis. And most of the time, they'd be right. But another condition that can mimic plantar fasciitis is fat pad atrophy, a condition that typically affects older adults, although younger people can also develop it.

Here are the symptoms for these conditions:

#### Plantar Fasciitis

- Sharp pain with your first steps in the morning or getting up after sitting for awhile
- May ease as you move around
- Pain is usually on the forward point of the heel



#### Inside this Issue:

- Foot and Ankle Center photos—2
- Poached Salmon Pesto Pasta—2
- Don't Confuse These 6 Common Foot Conditions (cont.)—3
- Travel Smart: Protect Your Feet on Your Next Overseas Trip—4

Continued on Page 3



Aiden Lund, MA



All Aboard!

### Poached Salmon Pesto Pasta

Now for a refreshing new take on salmon. Perfect for Spring!

#### *Poached Salmon*

- 1 lb. wild salmon
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup white wine
- 3 slices fresh lemon
- 1/2 cup fresh dill
- 1 small onion quartered
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tbsp rice wine vinegar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black peppercorns

#### *Vegan Avocado Almond Pesto*

- 2 medium avocados
- 2 cups fresh dill
- 1/3 cup raw almonds
- 1 small garlic clove
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp sea salt
- 1/4 tsp ground black

#### *Pasta and Veggies*

- Any type of pasta
- 1 cup of peas



Source: [Abra's Kitchen](#)

### Instructions

1. In a large pan with high sides combine water, wine, lemon, vinegar, onion, bay leaves, fresh dill, peppercorns, and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for 10 minutes to allow flavors to concentrate.
2. Add salmon and cook on simmer for 4 minutes then let rest for 2 minutes. For salmon thicker than 1.5" cook 2 more minutes. Set aside.
3. Combine avocado, dill, almonds, garlic, lemon juice, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Add to food processor and process until smooth. Add water or lemon juice if necessary.
4. Cook pasta according to directions in well salted water along with peas.
5. Toss hot pasta and peas with 1-2 cups pesto (as much as you like) and flaked salmon. Add dill and lemon on top.

## Fat Pad Atrophy

- Feels like a deep bruise under the heel
- Worse with prolonged standing or hard floors
- Pain is more in the center of the heel
- Doesn't get better as the day goes on



### *Bottom Line:*

- Morning pain = plantar fasciitis.
- Pain that worsens throughout the day = fat pad atrophy.

## Metatarsalgia vs. Morton's Neuroma

Pain in the ball of the foot can make everyday activities uncomfortable, especially walking or exercising.



Metatarsalgia and Morton's Neuroma are two other conditions that are frequently confused with each other.

While both occur in the ball of the foot, the location of the pain is what's key to making the right diagnosis.

### *Morton's Neuroma*

- Tingling and numbness that gets more painful over time
- Pain between the 3rd and 4th toes
- Clicking sensation at the 3rd and 4th toes

### *Metatarsalgia*

- Starts as dull pain and progresses to sharp pain
- No clicking sensation
- Pain is often spread out over entire ball of foot

### *Bottom Line:*

- Location of pain is key to diagnosis

## **Big Toe Pain: Hallux Rigidus vs. Gout**

If you've injured your big toe in sports or by running into furniture in the middle of the night, the cause of your throbbing, red digit is obvious.



But supposed it hurts and you can't identify a specific reason.

There are several chronic conditions that can cause big toe pain including Hallux rigidus and gout. Here are some ways to tell which condition you're dealing with.

### Hallux Rigidus (Arthritis)

- Gradual pain and stiffness
- Limited motion in the big toe
- Worse with walking or push-off

### Gout

- Sudden, severe pain (often overnight)
- Red, hot, swollen joint
- Very tender—even light touch hurts

### *Bottom Line*

- Slow and stiff = arthritis.
- Sudden and severe = gout

So many of my patients turning to Dr. Google or AI to try and diagnose their foot and ankle conditions.

While this can be useful it can also lengthen your time in pain due of improper diagnosis and treatment.

If you've self-diagnosed with the help of these online tools and you're not getting better, make an appointment at 206-368-7000.

## Travel Smart: Protect Your Feet on Your Next Overseas Trip

Many of patients are getting ready for an overseas trip. A little planning can make a big difference in how you feel during and after your travels.

### Choose the Right Footwear

I recently met with Jason Brown, owner of Sole Perfection shoes in Shoreline, to get some ideas for the best shoes to wear on a trip.



- Choose shoes you already know are comfortable and supportive. Don't break in new shoes.
- Look for shoes with good arch support, cushioning, and a stable sole.
- If you use custom orthotics or metatarsal pads be sure to pack them—and consider bringing a second pair of supportive shoes to rotate during your trip.

### How to Prevent Swelling and Improve Circulation

Long travel days, especially flights, can lead to swelling in your feet and ankles.

- Wear compression (support) socks on the plane to help improve circulation and energy.
- When flying, stand up, stretch, and walk the aisle every couple of hours if possible. Simple ankle movements—like circles and flexing your feet—can also keep blood flowing.

### Make A Pre-Travel Appointment

Finally, address any existing foot pain before you go. Conditions like [plantar fasciitis](#), [Achilles tendonitis](#), bunions, or tendonitis tend to flare up with increased activity. A quick visit before your trip can help you travel with confidence—and focus on enjoying the experience, not managing pain.

## Get This Newsletter Delivered to Your Inbox

Thanks so much for taking the time to read our newsletter. I hope you've found the information helpful. If you've received this newsletter online, please feel free to forward it to family or friends.

If you picked up this newsletter and would like to subscribe, you can do so by scanning the QR code on the right.

—Dr. Rion Berg



To make an appointment, call us at 206-368-7000.

