



Arthritis

What is it?

Arthritis is a general term for a variety of conditions that cause inflammation and degeneration of the cartilage and lining of the joints of the body. Arthritis can occur at any joint and is common in the feet and ankles. Arthritis is often considered a disease of the aging but can occur at any age. There are many different kinds of arthritis. Some of the most common types are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

What causes it?

Osteoarthritis is typically considered to result from normal "wear and tear" or age, but can also result from previous injury. Rheumatoid arthritis can occur at any age and there is no known cause for this condition. It can cause severe deformities of the joints, especially in the hands and feet.

Arthritis causes changes in joints and restriction of motion. These changes and restrictions can make walking painful.

How can a pedorthist help to treat?

Proper treatment of foot and ankle arthritis addresses both pain and joint deformity. Pain develops when the joint is injured. Injury to the joint may result from swelling caused by inflammatory arthritis or from the loss of joint surface (cartilage), often caused by trauma.

Orthotics can be used to help protect painful, swollen joints and to allow the joints to work in a more natural way. When the joints are allowed to work in as normal a way as possible, pain can be reduced.

Shoes are also important in reducing pain and should be properly fitted to the feet. They should not place excessive pressure on painful joints. An appropriate shoe should have a toe box that is shaped similarly to the foot and has enough depth to accommodate any abnormalities of the toes such as hammer or claw toes. The toe box should be wide enough so that it doesn't squeeze the forefoot and restrict movement. A rocker sole is very helpful in relieving pain in the toe region.

Your pedorthist can help to provide you with an orthotic, choose an appropriate shoe or modify shoes to better fit you and reduce your pain.