

The aim of this leaflet is to give you some understanding of the problems you have with your big toe joint and to provide some advice on how to manage this. It should be used along with information you may be given by your healthcare professional.

What is Hallux Limitus or Rigidus?

This is a common form of arthritis located at the base of the big toe (this joint is called the metatarsophalangeal, or MTP joint). This joint is important for the foot to function efficiently, as it needs to bend when the foot is in motion.

If this joint begins to stiffen (hallux limitus), walking can become a painful experience. The MTP joint has cartilage that covers the bones. Sometimes the cartilage can be damaged by either wear or tear or injury, which can lead to the formation or overgrowth of bone. This overgrowth can reduce the movement in the toe (hallux limitus), ultimately resulting in complete loss of movement (hallux rigidus).

What are the possible symptoms?

- Pain and stiffness in the big toe joint.
- Pain in the other metatarsophalangeal joints as they will take more load than normal.
- Swelling around the big toe joint.

What tests may be done?

In the majority of cases of Hallux Limitus or Rigidus, you do not need an x ray or any other tests to confirm what is wrong, unless your problem is severe enough that we may consider surgery. The main way to diagnose this is through what you tell us and examining your foot.

What can you do to help?

- Aim for a healthy body weight.
- If you can safely take over the counter anti-inflammatory medications, do this to help the pain. (Please speak to your Pharmacist or Doctor for advice if you are unsure).
- One of the most important things you can do to help is to wear the right footwear. You should try to wear wide shoes with a low heel that fit you comfortably. Shoes with laces or an adjustable strap are best as they can be adjusted to the width of your foot.
- We would advise that you do not wear high heeled, pointed or tight shoes as this will make your pain worse.

What else can be done?

If your pain does not start improving after a period of 3 months of following the advice above, please phone 0141 347 8909 to see a healthcare professional who can assess your foot and potentially recommend further treatment.