How Menopause Affects Your Feet with Dr Emily Splichal Transcript

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Hormones and Foot Health Overview

When we think about menopause and hormonal changes with age, most times people are not thinking about their feet. My name is Dr. Emily Spickle, functional podiatrist, and I'm here to speak to you about the effect that female hormones can have on foot health, especially as a woman is going through menoppause.

Now when it comes to menopauses and hormone changes, the main one that we're focusing on is estrogen. Estrogen has a deep relationship with collagen and collagen, which is a very important protein in our body, can be found in blood vessels.

in our tendons, our ligaments, or fascia.

How Estrogen Affects Collagen and the Feet

It's found in bone and it can have an effect on our skin. So when it comes to the foot, there are four main symptoms that I see in women. The first one is that we can start to have arches that fall and oftentimes this is only on one side, a unilateral one-sided collapse or drop of the arch.

Now this is associated with a very important muscle or tendon in the foot which is called the posterior tibialis. This is a muscle that runs from the inside arch up the lower leg and behind the calf.

That tendon is greatly affected from body weight and stress and then of course dropping estrogen levels.

Falling Arches and Posterior Tibialis Strain

As we start to strain and stress that tendon because of the hormonal changes, the repair mechanism is a little bit more difficult. This one side flattening is referred to as adult acquired flat foot and is very common in peri and postmenopausal women.

A second symptom that may be experienced in the feet is plantar fasciitis. This is a very common, similar to the changes in collagen as the falling arches, but this is very specific to bottom of the foot and it's also associated with changes and circulation.

Progesterone, the other female hormone, is associated changes with decrease in circulation and fluid balance. So experiencing heel pain means that the recovery may take a little bit longer.

Plantar Fasciitis and Slower Healing

For both the falling arches and the potential of a plantar fasciitis that is slow to heal is where I may recommend to women to use an arch support. That arch supports is maintaining the integrity of the foot while you are going through these different hormonal changes.

Now another symptom that you may experience in the feet is an increased risk of stress fractures. Estrogen, which affects collagen, means that it's affecting bones.

And where we experience stress fracture in our feet, is most commonly in long bones which are called the metatarsals.

Stress Fracture Risk and Foot Strength

Now the way that I approach stress fractions as a functional podiatrist, is I focus on prevention and the way that we prevent stress fractures is by keeping a very strong foot.

We have 26 muscles in the bottom of the feet and their job is to absorb impact forces. So strong intrinsic muscles of that feet can help prevent stressed fractured in women who are going through peri and postmenopausal changes.

A fourth and final symptom that you may experience in the feet is fat pad atrophy. Now in our feet, in the ball of the foot, and in heel, we have fat pads.

It is common to start to have a thinning and a wearing down of those fatpads, which can be very painful. The woman may feel like she's walking on the knuckles of her foot when you start lose fat pad in ball or heel.

Fat Pad Atrophy and Comfort Solutions

A very sharp pain that your bone on floor. Now, in this case, I often will recommend an insole that is made of plastazote. It's almost like a memory foam.

This can bring comfort and accommodation to the foot where the fat pads are thinning or wearing down. Another recommendation is I like toe spacers. Toe spacars, which spread the toes, actually help lift up off of the ball of foot.

this is reducing pressure. Now all of these symptoms, regardless of which ones you may be experiencing, I want to reassure you, are based off of this different hormonal changes.

So as you are working with your medical provider to maintain hormon balance, do know that these systems will start to minimize.

Closing Advice and Where to Learn More

To learn more about how hormones affect your feet and how I practice podiatry, please visit dremiliesplicl.com.