

TURF TOE: SMALL AREA, BIG PROBLEMS!

Daniel Welch, Certified Athletic Trainer
Southeast Georgia Health System
Glynn Academy High School

Athletes who play sports such as soccer or football are often at risk of injuring their big toe. Turf toe is an injury that may cause a player extreme discomfort while running or jumping.

"Though it initially seems trivial, turf toe can be a debilitating injury. It needs to be treated properly and not taken lightly or it can become a nagging problem throughout the season," says Beau Sasser, M.D., board-certified orthopaedic surgeon and medical director, Southeast Georgia Health System Sports Medicine.

Turf toe is essentially a sprain of the ligament in the big toe. Ligaments connect bones to other bones, and a sprain is the stretching of a particular ligament. It is usually caused by hyperextending the big toe and can be caused by a couple of different mechanisms.

These include:

- Standing on the balls of your feet as another person falls onto you, causing your big toe to hyperextend
- Stopping suddenly when running, causing your big toe to slide into the end of your shoe and bend up and backward as you go forward

The term turf toe is applied to this injury because it often involves football or soccer players who play on artificial turf surfaces. Of course, athletes of all sports are susceptible to this injury, as well as dancers, those with poor coordination and athletes who play in shoes with a flexible sole.

Symptoms of turf toe include the following:

- Pain and tenderness in the ball of the foot and the big toe
- Swelling and bruising of the ball of the foot and the big toe
- Inability to bear weight on the ball of the injured foot
- Inability to push off on the big toe
- Reduced range of motion in the big toe

If you think you may have a turf toe injury, it is important to see a health care professional and have an X-ray taken to rule out a bone fracture. An MRI scan may be used to determine if the ligament is completely torn.

Because this injury involves inflammation of the ligaments, treatments including rest, ice, compression and elevation (the RICE technique) are often

helpful in relieving the symptoms, as well as taking a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory (NSAIDS) medication. Early diagnosis and treatment are helpful in controlling the pain and symptoms quickly.

In some cases, an insert may be placed in the shoe to give the foot extra support, and special taping techniques can also help to reduce pain in the toe while participating in daily activities. Surgery may be required if a small piece of bone has been broken off by the injury to the ligament or the ligament is completely torn.

Meet Dr. Beau Sasser

Beau Sasser, M.D., is a native of Glynn County and a graduate of Glynn Academy. He received his undergraduate degree from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, and his medical doctorate degree from the Medical College of Georgia, where he also completed both his internship and orthopaedic residency.



Following his residency, Dr. Sasser received exclusive sports medicine training while in a fellowship program with the Kansas City Orthopaedic Institute. During his time there, he worked with the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs, treating a variety of sports and orthopaedic injuries incurred by these elite athletes.

Dr. Sasser returned to Glynn County in 2005 and joined Summit Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Surgery, where he specializes in sports medicine. At Southeast Georgia Health System, Dr. Sasser is a key orthopaedic surgeon at the Orthopaedic & Spine Center and serves as medical director of Sports Medicine. Dr. Sasser is board-certified with the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery.

Summit Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Surgery is a strategic affiliate of Southeast Georgia Health System and has three convenient locations. For more information, call 912-262-9961 in Brunswick, 912-466-5570 on St. Simons Island, or 912-576-6355 in St. Marys.

TURF TOE TAPING INSTRUCTIONS:



Supplies:

Tape adherent

1" Tape

1.5" Tape

Apply tape adherent to the foot, and ask the athlete to keep their foot in a neutral position. Begin by placing an anchor of 1" tape around the big toe, and an anchor of 1.5" tape around the mid-foot.



Continue same technique of overlapping the strips on the bottom of the foot, again going from the anchor on the toe to the anchor on the foot.



End the technique by going over the anchors on the toe and mid-foot to secure the strips.



Apply strips of the 1" tape from the anchor on the toe to the anchor on the top of the foot. Depending on the size of the foot this may take 4-6 strips to cover the area. Overlap each strip by half the width of the tape.



For more information about Southeast Georgia Health System visit sghs.org