Metatarsal Pad Placement

Metatarsal pads are used to help spread your transverse arch (the arch behind the ball of your foot that runs across the width of your foot), reduce your toe overextension, and encourage the return of your forefoot fat pad to its rightful position supporting the heads of your metatarsal bones. The key to placing metatarsal pads is to make sure they’re pressing into the space behind the ball of the foot, not under the ball of the foot. Placing the pad under the ball of the foot will be uncomfortable and could possibly worsen your condition. The following steps will help you place the pads:

1. Use your shoe liner as a gauge:

   The easiest way to place your metatarsal pads is to use your shoe’s liner as a gauge. First, pull the liner out of your shoes. If the liner will not come out, or if there is no liner, then the act of placing the pads is more challenging. If this is the case, and if you don’t feel confident that you can place the pads correctly, we’d recommend having them placed by a podiatrist.

2. Find the ball of your foot:

   You’ll need to figure out where the ball of your foot sits on your liner when you’re wearing your shoe. This is easy to see in a pair of shoes that you’ve been wearing for a while, as there will be worn areas where the ball of your foot has pressed into the liner. If your shoe is new, place your foot on the liner and note the position of the ball of your foot. The picture to the left shows this area labeled.

3. Place your metatarsal pad:

   Place your pad just behind that area where the ball of your foot contacts your liner (again, note the picture above). The pad should be horizontally centered so that it’s not too far toward the inside or outside of your foot.

4. Try on your shoe:

   Put the liners back in your shoes. Make sure that both pad and liner are “seated” properly. After putting on your shoes, you should feel the pad pressing into the sole of your foot just behind the ball of the foot. This sensation typically feels “good.” Sometimes, however, the pad may feel “weird.” If you feel as though your pad needs to be moved, please do so. Most pads can be pulled up and moved several times before losing their adhesive quality.

5. Adjusting your pad:

   If your foot is sore when your pad is in place, we recommend keeping your pad in for a few hours to see if your foot’s going to adapt to it appropriately. If your foot doesn’t adapt, pull the pad up and place it in a better position (i.e. in a position that doesn’t make your foot sore). A sore foot from a metatarsal pad often means that the pad is too far forward. The fix is easy: just move the pad back a little. If you’re still having trouble, take the pad out and make an appointment with your podiatrist to help with the placement.