

This week I am continuing my discussion of foot problems. Last week I explained how the foot is constructed and how many foot problems develop. In this column I want to explain treatment options.

When many people develop pain in their feet they look for some type of cushion to go in their shoes. The products in the drug stores often are packaged to allow the customer to feel how soft they are. The problem is what feels soft to the touch is far different from what will feel soft to walk on. With the fingers you might squeeze the product with a few pounds of pressure, not the amount of pressure equal to your body weight. Many of these products simply collapse under the weight of the body and provide very little cushion.

Extra cushion is rarely the solution anyway. The problem is usually abnormal shape of the foot and abnormal motion of the joints. Orthotics are commonly prescribed to correct the abnormal shape of the foot. They can be quite effective, but if the joints are misaligned, it can hurt to wear them.

Cortisone injections are another common treatment for foot pain. They are used to reduce the inflammation in the foot. Unfortunately the results are often short lived because the cortisone does not correct the cause of the inflammation.

The underlying cause of many foot problems is a malfunction of the normal joint movement. The joints can become misaligned and when this happens it puts abnormal stress on the ligaments that hold the foot bones together. In time this stress causes tissue damage followed by inflammation. To truly correct the problem, it is necessary to restore the normal alignment and joint motion. Restoring normal alignment also helps make wearing orthotics more effective and comfortable.

Although podiatrists are specially trained foot doctors, very few have training in correcting the subtle misalignments that can cause or aggravate many foot problems. Correcting joint malfunction is the arena of the chiropractor. Fortunately, many chiropractors have been trained to adjust the feet as well as the spine. By performing adjustments on the feet, many cases of foot pain will completely resolve.