

# MINOR INJURIES THAT MAKE YOU MISERABLE

Although we may be embarrassed about it (or refuse to admit it), we've all had a moment when we stubbed a toe and felt like the world was ending. One second everything is grand and then...BAM! You know what you did. You know how painful it is going to be. But then a second goes by and there's no pain. You brace yourself. Another second goes by, and you relax a little. Maybe you didn't hit it as hard as you th...oh...ow...Ow...OW! The pain rushes in. Your vision becomes blurry, tears swell in your eyes, and you begin to question your existence.

How can one little toe bump cause such excruciating pain? It must be broken, right? No. It's most just stubbed. If the injury was minor, why then did you feel like you were going to die?

Unfortunately, stubbed toes aren't the only foot injuries that seem minor yet cause severe pain.

## Why Small Injuries Cause Such Excruciating Pain?

Despite the amount of pressure your feet contend with on a daily basis, they're remarkably sensitive to outside forces. That doesn't mean that your feet are unusually delicate. Their structure is strong; after all, your feet support your full body weight. They also adapt to hazardous and damaging conditions—for example, by forming calluses to prevent blisters. However, to maintain such a durable structure, your feet contain hundreds of tiny tendons, muscles, and nerves that are all subject to damage, even during relatively minor accidents.

**Let's look at a few examples of how a minor injury can harm the foot and result in disproportionate pain:**

**-Stubbed toes.** In many cases, when you stub your toe you wind up spraining it or fracturing it. A sprain occurs when the force of the blow tears a ligament

(and damages the nearby nerves) that supports the toe. Although not life-threatening, this tear can be extremely painful as blood rushes to the injury, leading to swelling and extra pressure on the nerves. A hairline fracture in the toe can also scrape the surrounding nerves, causing irritation and pain.

**-Sprained ankle.** Twisting or falling on your ankle can easily cause a sprain. Just as in a sprained toe, a sprained ankle occurs when the ligaments that support the ankle are stretched or torn. This damage causes blood to rush to the area which results in swelling and sensitive bruising. Continued movement can irritate the ligaments further and cause nerves to send pain signals to the brain.

## **-Cuts, burns, scrapes, and other skin damage.**

Although the skin on the soles of your feet is thicker than anywhere else on your body—to protect the soles from the pressure of your body's weight—it is also the most sensitive. To adequately relay sensory information to the brain, the skin on the soles of the feet must be extremely sensitive. For example, your feet must be able to tell the brain where the floor is as you walk, just as your skin must alert the brain if you step into bathwater that is too hot. Unfortunately, this sensitivity can cause minor cuts and burns to feel ten times worse than they actually are.

