

One fairly common cause of forefoot pain is due to sesamoiditis, an inflammation of the area directly underneath the first metatarsal head (see figure). There are two sesamoid bones located in this area and they are about the size of peas. The function of these sesamoid bones is to provide leverage for the many tendons that invest in there as they continue their course and insert into the big toe.

A sesamoid bone may become inflamed if you step on a stone directly in this area. The bone can even fracture. An X-ray shows it to be in several fragments if it is fractured, though sesamoids can normally appear in more than one piece. To clarify the matter, an X-ray can be taken of the other foot for comparison. Fractured sesamoids usually don't heal well because of their poor blood supply, but an asymptomatic non-union of the fracture may occur and surgical excision of the bone is rarely necessary.

Sesamoiditis may occur due to abnormal foot mechanics whereby excessive weight bearing occurs on the first metatarsal head. This can be treated with accommodative padding in the shoes. Abnormal joint forces can cause a strain on the area, also, causing sesamoiditis.

General treatment for sesamoiditis includes padding, changing shoes, anti-inflammatories, ice, and that four-letter word **REST** (or at least decreasing your mileage). In severe cases, orthotics and cortisone injections are appropriate. As stated previously, surgical excision is rarely necessary.

The sesamoid bones are tiny, but when they hurt, they can bring you to your knees. Some of the above suggestions may prove helpful to those so afflicted.

