

# RUNNERS WORLD

## MEDICAL & TRAINING



EDITED BY BETH ECK

### Toe Service

**Q:** What causes numbness on the underside of my toes? I've been running for three years, and this just started happening.

*R.S., TAMPA, FLA.*

**A:** Numbness on the bottom of your toes can be caused by several factors, including tight shoes, hammertoes (toes that curl downward) or crooked toes.

Let me ask you this: **Are you experiencing persistent toe pressure while wearing your running shoes? If so, your shoes are probably too snug.** This can affect your circulation and cause a numb sensation. And if you have hammertoes or crooked toes, they may be pinching your normal toes.

Again, this would cause a decrease in the circulation in your toes and result in numbness.

Fortunately for you we can rule out a pinched nerve (a.k.a. Morton's neuroma). With this condition, the numbness usually is present on the sides of two or three adjacent toes, not underneath on the toe pads.

Here are some suggestions: Make sure your sock seams aren't irritating your toes. If they are, buy new socks. Also, I'd recommend moving up a half size in your running shoes or trying a wider width. (Don't forget, runners' feet lengthen as we age.) Finally you might try wearing a crest pad or foam toe separator (available at drugstores) to help reduce pressure on your toes.

—*Richard T. Braver, D.P.M., runner and podiatrist practicing in Englewood and Fair Lawn, N.J., and member of RW's Science Advisory Board*



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