

Fact Sheet

Compartment Syndrome

What is Compartment Syndrome?

Compartment syndrome is a common cause of exercise-related leg / foot pain. Muscles in the lower legs are divided into muscle compartments which contain nerves & muscle.

Compartment syndrome is when the tissue pressure becomes too high within these muscle compartments during exercise. High pressures within this limited space reduces the blood flow to tissues in that space. If there is not enough blood to supply the local tissues, this causes pain during exercise.

Who gets it?

Compartment syndromes may be acute, caused by a single trauma such as a fracture or muscle rupture, or it may be chronic, caused by prolonged repetitive stress and overuse. Both acute and chronic compartment syndromes can occur in sports people, whether professional or amateur.

Symptoms

- No pain at rest
- Aching pain or cramping pain that begins 10 to 30 minutes after starting exercise
- Pain that is relieved by rest
- Tightness and swelling of the affected leg
- Extreme pain brought on by stretching the muscle
- Numbness of parts of the foot and leg

What can a Podiatrist do?

- Education on appropriate footwear / footwear modification
- The use of orthotics can aid in offloading the affected compartment
- Prescribe specific stretching exercises
- Conduct a full biomechanical assessment – development may be due to a person's specific biomechanics (i.e the structure, alignment & function of the feet & legs)
- Refer for further imaging / testing – this includes MRI, Ultrasound & measuring the pressure inside the muscle compartment before & after exercise



ALWAYS CONSULT A TRAINED PROFESSIONAL

The information in this resource is general in nature and is only intended to provide a summary of the subject matter covered. It is not a substitute for medical advice and you should always consult a trained professional practising in the area of medicine in relation to any injury or condition. You use or rely on information in this resource at your own risk and no party involved in the production of this resource accepts any responsibility for the information contained within it or your use of that information.