

Like Walking on a Cloud

Novel treatment replaces lost padding to cushion the foot while standing and walking.

It is believed, states the US National Institutes of Health, that the average person with an 80-year life span will walk the distance of the world twice in their lifetime! Age and mileage like that put tremendous strain on the natural protective framework of the feet.



DR. PAMELA KIRBY, P.A.

“The main problem is that the fat pad that cushions the bones and the bottom part of the foot wears away over time,” explains Pamela Kirby, DPM, a board-certified podiatrist. “This is called *fat pad atrophy*, and it can lead to significant pain and even breakdowns in the skin.”

Fat pad atrophy is the thinning or shifting of the fat stores over the heads of the metatarsal bones, the bones that make up the ball of the foot. The fat pad acts as a shock absorber to cushion the bones and defuse forces during weight bearing, such as when standing or walking. It also protects the underlying tendons, muscles, nerves and blood vessels.

When age or another condition destroys or displaces this protective fat layer, the foot is left without a shock absorber. Then, the forces created when standing and walking are transferred directly to the bones and other tissues. This irritates the tissues and leads to pain, inflammation and, ultimately, skin ulcer formation.

“Age is the most common cause of fat pad atrophy, but there are other contributing factors,” notes Dr. Kirby. “Genetics have been linked to this condition, as has diabetes-related neuropathy.

“Another risk factor is having very high arches. Wearing high heels or shoes with very thin soles, or walking barefoot a lot can trigger or worsen this condition. People with rheumatoid arthritis are also at risk.”

Pain and tenderness in the ball of the foot, especially when standing or walking, are the main symptoms of fat pad atrophy. Other signs to look for include difficulty when walking barefoot and the formation of calluses or ulcerations. The metatarsal bones may also become more prominent because the fat pad that covered them is no longer there.

On a cloud

For those with fat pad atrophy, Dr. Kirby offers a novel, minimally invasive treatment called RADIUSSE Volumizing Filler, which is injected into the problem area of the foot. This product is designed to not only offer temporary relief, but also to provide a structure for the body to rebuild the missing tissue.

“The fillers make you feel like you are walking on a cloud,” describes Dr. Kirby. “There are usually about two weeks when patients need to stay off of their feet so the filler has time to form and to fill in the crevices and to mold. But after that, there is usually about nine months to a year and a half of relief before they need another injection.”

RADIUSSE gel implants not only



Dr. Kirby has expertise in treating disorders of the foot, ankle and lower leg.

cushion the bones, they also provide support and protection to the tendons, ligaments and other soft tissues in the foot.

“RADIUSSE gel bonds safely into the patient’s foot compartment to cushion the thin areas of the foot where the pain is originating,” states Dr. Kirby.

FHCN—Patti DiPanfilo

Walking on a cloud

For more information about this topic or any of the services provided by Dr. Pamela Kirby and her staff, call the office at **(386) 788-4111**. The office is located at **4606 S. Clyde Morris Blvd., Suite 1J**, in Port Orange. They can also be found online at **www.pamkirby.com**.



Pamela E. Kirby, DPM, is a Diplomate of the American Board of Podiatric Medicine. She received her Doctor of Podiatric Medicine degree from the Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine in Cleveland and completed a podiatric residency at the Baltimore Veterans Administration Hospital. Dr. Kirby is a fellow in The American College of Foot and Ankle Orthopaedics and Medicine and an associate in The American Professional Wound Care Association. She is a member of the Florida American Podiatric Medical Association and American Association of Women Podiatrists, and is the past president of the Florida Podiatric Medical Association. Dr. Kirby specializes in care of the foot, ankle and lower leg. She commonly provides treatment of diabetic ulcers, neuropathy, fractures, sprains, corns, calluses and ingrown nails. Dr. Kirby sees patients of all ages.