

Bicycling

Cool Your Hot Dogs

Four simple steps to take the pressure off swollen, burning feet

By Marianne McGinnis



Painful burning on the ball of the foot (a.k.a. hot foot, or metatarsalgia) is usually a result of hot weather or poorly fitting shoes—or both—on long, hilly rides.

"Pressure can pinch nerves in one or both feet and shut down a ride fast," says Amol Saxena, DPM, a time-trial cyclist and podiatrist in the department of sports medicine at the Palo Alto Medical Hospital in California. "If hot foot strikes while you're on a ride, there isn't much you can do other than stop, take off your shoes and let your feet cool down." Saxena takes these precautions to keep his feet cool and comfortable during races.

DO THE SQUISH TEST When shopping for [cycling shoes](#), pull out the insole and hold it up to the bottom of your bare foot (in front of a mirror). "if you can see any part of your foot beyond the borders of the insole, you need a wider shoe," says Saxena. A tip: When you find the perfect shoe, buy another pair for backup.

TAKE A LOAD OFF Move your cleats a few millimeters closer to the heel of the shoe to take pressure off your forefoot. or switch to a larger-platform pedal to more evenly distribute the pressure across your feet.

CUSHION THE BLOW Over time and after many miles on the bike, your feet start to lose their natural padding, which can make riding painful. adding more supportive insoles to your cycling shoes can help. if you're shopping for new shoes, take the insoles along to make sure you get the best fit.

BE A MATERIAL GIRL Choose socks made of high-tech fibers such as Coolmax and Thermax, which wick away sweat. and don't buy a pair right off the rack; try them on with your cycling shoes first.