

Weekend Doctor

By **DR. THOMAS F. VAIL**

At last, football season has come to a close. We have endured the long road with our favorite team. Unfortunately, every season brings the possibility that our favorite player might get injured.

In just one week in October, three NFL players succumbed to foot injuries. New York Jets wide receiver Santonio Holmes, Green Bay Packers running back Cedric Benson, and Carolina Panthers center Ryan Kalil all suffered Lisfranc injuries.

Most of us know about common athletic injuries such as a torn ACL or an ankle sprain. However, with the way this year's football season started, it may be worth your time to learn about Lisfranc injuries.

The Lisfranc joint connects your forefoot to your midfoot. In other words, the Lisfranc joint connects the bones in the front of the foot (toes and metatarsals), to the bones in the middle of the foot (cuneiforms and cuboid). This joint is held in place by several ligaments.

The Lisfranc joint is very important in stabilizing the arch of your foot. A sharp and sudden twisting motion of the foot, like those made when playing football, can cause damage to the Lisfranc ligaments.

Podiatrists usually put Lisfranc injuries into three categories:

- **Lisfranc injury:** A ligament is stretched (sprained) out of its normal range.
- **Lisfranc fracture:** A ligament is torn completely and a piece of bone has broken off (fracture).
- **Lisfranc fracture dislocation:** The bones of the midfoot have shifted from their normal position.

Lisfranc injuries can be extremely painful. The pain will be worse when walking or standing.

Like other injuries, you can rest, ice and elevate the area. However, if you think you have a Lisfranc injury, you definitely want to be evaluated by your podiatrist for a proper diagnosis.

Lisfranc injuries are sometimes difficult to diagnose, so you will need a qualified foot specialist to help you manage your injury. A diagnosis can be made through clinical tests such as the "piano key" test (moving the toes up and down to see where the injury is) or by imaging test such as X-rays, MRI or CT scan.

The treatment for a Lisfranc injury depends on how severe the injury is. A sprain of the ligament typically requires a cast that is worn for several weeks. A fracture will more than likely need surgical repair.

To completely fix the injury, your podiatrist may need to use wires and screws inside the foot to help your foot stay stable. Whenever you undergo foot surgery, always follow the rehabilitation guidelines set by your podiatrist.

This type of injury can require you to stay off your injured foot for at least six to eight weeks. It may be difficult to stay off your feet for this long, but it is all for the best.

Even with the best care, Lisfranc injuries take a while to completely heal. If you neglect your injury or do not follow rehabilitation guidelines, your chances of having complications are higher. Complications include chronic pain and early arthritis.

Now that you know about Lisfranc injuries, let's hope that our favorite players avoid this foot injury during the upcoming bowl games. And, go Irish!



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