

# sound *RUNNER*

*a running store...and more*

## Foot Notes

**Are you steps away from injury? Ask your feet.**

### **The Warning: Bunions**

When the joint at the base of the big toe faces extra pressure, it can swell and form a bunion: a bony protrusion on the side of the foot that may be painful as the big toe moves out of alignment. In extreme cases, the big toe overlaps the second and third toes. "Bunions tend to happen in runners with flat feet that roll in, because the muscles that stabilize the big toes don't work as well when the foot overpronates," says Stephen Pribut, D.P.M., a sports podiatrist in Washington, D.C. Bunions don't have to hurt. Make sure your shoes/running shoes are wide and deep enough in the toebox, and avoid shoes with seams that rub against the problem joint. If you notice changes to your bunions or feel pain, consult a sports podiatrist. Orthotics can correct the pronation and slow the development of bunions—which require surgery to correct severe cases.

### **The Warning: Neuroma**

A neuroma is an enlarged nerve, which most frequently occurs in the interspace between the third and fourth toes. Though neuromas aren't visible, you can definitely feel them: They can cause toe cramps or a more general pain in the ball of the foot. According to Dr. Campbell, hill running, which puts abnormal pressure on the ball of the foot, is a common cause of neuromas, so stick to the flats until the pain subsides. Your shoes might also be too tight in the toebox. Remove the insert, stand on it, and take a close look: If any portion of your foot is hanging over the insert, your shoes are too small. **The Warning: Plantar Fasciitis** Plantar fasciitis, which causes pain in the heel or arch, occurs when the connective fibers that run along the bottom of the foot become inflamed at the spot where they attach to the heel bone. The pain most often occurs in one foot, not both, says Dr. Pribut, because of a leg-length discrepancy or strength imbalance. Runners who suffer from plantar fasciitis often have weak muscles in their feet. So try this exercise to strengthen your toes and feet: Keeping your heel on the floor, curl your toes down against a towel and try to drag it closer to you. Plantar fasciitis can also signal tight calf muscles, so Pribut recommends gentle stretching of those muscles to ease the pain and to prevent a recurrence.