

Feet First

Raritan Bay Medical Center When foot pain sidelined a young girl, a Raritan Bay foot surgeon got her back in step.

Last year, 11-year-old Sahaana Shastri of Freehold complained that her feet hurt constantly, especially after fun activities, like bike riding with friends.

Her parents, Murali Shastri and dentist Swati Gupta, took her to their chiropractor for treatments. But Sahaana's pain persisted, so her parents made an appointment with **Ujjwal Datta, DPM, FACFAS**, a foot surgeon at Raritan Bay Medical Center's Human Motion Institute.

Dr. Datta listened carefully to Sahaana describe her foot discomfort, then ordered X-rays and an MRI to evaluate the problem. After reviewing the results, he was able to diagnose the cause of pain in Sahaana's feet. A combination of interconnecting conditions — the presence of an uncommon extra bone called an accessory navicular in both feet and the more common flexible flat foot deformity — were working in concert to put stress on soft tissue. This stress can stretch, tear and cause inflammation to the important tendons in the feet attaching muscles to bones and, in Sahaana's case, cause posterior tibial tendon dysfunction (PTTD). PTTD causes severe pain and is essentially debilitating to the patient.

"Dr. Datta concluded that this accessory navicular in both her feet was the root of Sahaana's problems and that, combined with her flat feet, caused the unrelenting pain that was limiting her physical activities," says Murali.



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Getting a Leg Up

To treat the condition, Dr. Datta started with conservative methods, including having Sahaana wear orthotics, use a protective walking boot and then progress to partial immobilization in casts. But when those efforts failed, surgery was her only option.

In June 2016, in Raritan Bay's Surgery Center at Old Bridge, Dr. Datta operated on Sahaana's left foot, removing the accessory navicular bone, and then repaired the posterior tibial tendon, reattaching it to the normal navicular bone.

Six weeks later, Dr. Datta performed the same surgery on her right foot. The procedures changed the anatomy of her feet, creating more support for her arches and essentially curing her extremely tender flat feet.

"Sahaana's parents were wise to bring her to the Human Motion Institute because children do not grow out of flat feet," says Dr. Datta. "In fact, if young children have a change in gait, ongoing pain or noticeable flat feet, early intervention is important before the condition progresses. Most often, if early intervention is utilized, the problem is easily and conservatively managed with custom orthotics."

Wheeling Around Town

Now age 12, Sahaana has recovered from her podiatric journey and is zipping around on her bicycle.

"She was out of commission for a while, but we knew that she needed corrective surgery before her feet deteriorated further," says Murali. "I'm glad we found expert care with Dr. Datta and that Sahaana is active once again." ■



Sahaana Shastri, 12, loves riding her bike on the Henry Hudson Trail. She also enjoys singing.

Getting You Back in Motion

From spine care to sports medicine, the Human Motion Institute has one goal — to return patients with musculoskeletal injuries to normal function as quickly and safely as possible. Call 1-855-5-MOTION to learn more.

