

Smilin' Feet

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Your Feet

Each foot has 26 bones, 33 joints, over 100 tendons, 250,000 sweat glands and bears tons of weight in an average day of walking. Most people take 8,000-10,000 steps per day. One in four experience foot discomfort. 69% have never visited a podiatrist. Most believe foot pain is normal or do not realize treatment is easy.

Top Ten Foot Health Tips

1. Do not ignore pain – foot pain is not normal. If pain persists, see a podiatric physician.
2. Inspect your feet regularly. Pay attention to changes in color and temperature of your feet. Look for thick or discolored nails (a sign of developing fungus), and check for cracks or cuts in the skin. Peeling or scaling on the soles of feet may indicate athlete's foot. Any growth on/in the foot is not considered normal.
3. Wash your feet regularly, especially between the toes, and be sure to dry them completely.
4. Trim toenails straight across, but not too short. Be careful not to cut nails in corners or on the sides; it can lead to ingrown toenails. Persons with diabetes, poor circulation, or heart problems should not treat their own feet because they are more prone to infection.
5. Make sure that your shoes fit properly. Purchase new shoes later in the day when feet tend to be at their largest and replace worn out shoes as soon as possible.
6. Select and wear the right shoe for the activity which you are engaged in (running shoes for running).
7. Alternate shoes – avoid wearing the same pair of shoes every day.
8. Avoid walking barefooted – your feet will be more prone to injury and infection. At the beach or when wearing sandals, always use sun block on your feet just as on the rest of your body.
9. Be cautious when using home remedies for foot ailments; self-treatment can often turn a minor problem into a major problem.
10. If you are a person with diabetes, it is vital that you see a podiatric physician at least once a year for a foot check-up.

Shoe Buying Tips

- ❖ Try on shoes at the end of the day when your feet are at their largest.
- ❖ Measure both feet and stand while being measured.
- ❖ Walk around the store to make sure that shoes fit well and are comfortable.
- ❖ Do not rely on the shoe breaking in before it fits comfortably.
- ❖ Buy shoes for the larger foot. Both feet are seldom the same size.
- ❖ Ignore shoe size; pay attention to what feels best and provides comfort.
- ❖ Try on shoes wearing the same type of socks or stocking you expect to wear with the shoes.





Pampering Your Feet

1. Soak your feet in a warm tub of water for at least 5 minutes. Make sure the tub is large enough for both of your feet to soak at the same time.
2. Raise your feet out of the tub and dip either a foot file or pumice stone into the water. Use the file/pumice stone to gently smooth the skin around the heel and the balls and sides of the feet.
3. For extra soothing and softening, use an exfoliating scrub and massage your entire foot and lower leg. The scrub exfoliates the skin by removing dead skin buildup that is often caused by wearing a certain type of shoes. Wash off all traces of exfoliation with a damp towel.
4. Use a towel to pat feet dry and be sure to dry between each toe. While you are drying, loosen your joints by cupping your heel with one hand at the ankle and grabbing the top of your foot with the other. Rotate the foot slowly at the ankle a few times in each direction.
5. Apply and massage a health amount of emollient-enriched skin all over your feet to hydrate the skin and increase circulation (do not apply lotion between your toes – this may promote a foot infection like Athlete’s Foot). For added relief and relaxation while moisturizing, use your thumbs to apply extra pressure to the ball of our foot and arch. This will help to release tension in your arches. For all over relief, use your hand to squeeze your Achilles tendon (the fleshy area about your heel) one foot at a time for 5 seconds, repeat 2-3 times.
6. Gently push back cuticles with an instrument such as a cuticle pusher or manicure stick. Cuticles, which are located between the nail and underlying soft tissue, provide a protective barrier against infection and should never be cut. Destruction of the cuticle could result in infection and incessantly pushing back your cuticle will only make them thicker.
7. Only if you have healthy nails should nail polish be applied. Nail polish blocks out moisture and doesn’t allow the nail bed to “breathe”. People who suffer from already discolored toenails will aggravate their condition by not allowing their nails to be exposed to air. Whether you have discolored nails or not it is advisable to remove polish regularly.
8. Before bed, very lightly wrap cellophane around your entire foot. The cellophane will act as a makeshift sauna by locking in moisture. By morning, your feet will feel soothingly soft
9. Continue to keep your feet healthy by protecting the skin that surrounds them with a waterproof, oil-free sunscreen every time you slip on sandals or go barefoot at the beach.



Glossary of Terms for Foot Problems

- **Achilles Tendonitis:** Irritation/inflammation of the tendon that attaches to the back of the heel bone.
- **Blisters:** Fluid filled bumps caused by skin irritation from intense contact from an external source.
- **Bunions:** Painful enlargement at the joint at the base of the big toe, causing the skin over the joint to become swollen and tender. A bunion can also occur on the little toe from sitting cross-legged for long periods.
- **Calluses/Corns:** Areas where the top layer of skin has thickened in response to pressure exerted by bone in a tight fitting shoe. The thickened, hardened area irritates underlying skin resulting in localized soreness often associated with walking. Corns are most common on the big toe and fifth toe or between toes. Calluses also are found underneath ends of foot bones.
- **Flatfoot:** A deformity of the feet, caused by weakened or injured muscles and ligaments of the arch.
- **Foot Odor:** Caused by excessive perspiration; daily hygiene is essential. Change shoes & socks often.
- **Fungal Nails/Onychomycosis:** Progressive change in a toenail's quality and color caused by infection/fungi under the nail; capable of spreading to other toes or even fingernails.
- **Hammertoe:** A condition, usually stemming from muscle imbalance or improper footwear, in which the toe is bent in a claw, or hammer-like position.
- **Heel Spurs:** Growths of bone on the underside of the foot in the area of the heel bone.
- **Ingrown Toenail:** Nails whose corners or sides dig painfully into the skin of the toes.
- **Metatarsals:** The bones that form the front of the foot's instep. Five parallel metatarsal bones in each foot form the ball of the foot; together with the tarsals, they form the arch of the foot.
- **Neuromas:** Enlarged benign growths of nerves. They are most common between the third and fourth toes. Caused by injury, pressure or tissue rubbing against and irritating the nerves.
- **Orthopaedics/Orthopedics:** The medical specialty devoted to the diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and prevention of injuries of your musculoskeletal system.
- **Orthopaedists/Orthopedists:** An orthopedic physician/surgeon with up to 14 years of formal education including four years in medical school, and five years in orthopedic residency.
- **Phalanges:** The fourteen small bones that make up the toes. There are two phalanges in each large toe, and three in each smaller toe.
- **Plantar Fasciitis:** Inflamed, fibrous ligament-like band of tissue supporting the arch of the foot.
- **Plantar Warts:** Condition on the sole (plantar or bottom surface) of the foot caused by a virus that may invade the foot through cuts and breaks in the skin. Walking barefoot on warm moist environments, like public showers, can expose you to this sometimes painful skin infection.
- **Podiatry:** The health care field that specializes in conditions and function of the human foot and ankle. It includes examination, diagnosis and treatment by medical and surgical methods.
- **Podiatrist:** A podiatric physician, Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (DPM), specializing in treatment and conditions of the foot and ankle.
- **Tarsals:** The bones that make up the heel and the back of the instep. There are seven tarsals in each foot. Together with the metatarsals, they form the arch of the foot.
- **Talipes:** Also known as clubfoot. This common condition of the foot is caused by shortening of muscles and tendons and is usually a congenital deformity.



Arthritis Foot Care

- ☑ Osteoarthritis is a degenerative joint disease characterized by a breakdown of cartilage and the development of bone spurs, which is not reversible. The onset is generally gradual, but may also be caused by sudden injury.
- ☑ Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is a major crippling disorder and perhaps the most serious form of arthritis. It is a complex, chronic inflammatory system of diseases, often affecting more than a dozen smaller joints during the course of the disease, characterized by stiffness and pain, fatigue, serious joint deformity and loss of motion. The disease may remain active or go into remission.
- ☑ RA loosens the ligaments and can cause bones to push against the skin on the bottom of the foot, leading to tender calluses and ulcerations on the ball of the foot.
- ☑ Gout (gouty arthritis) is a condition caused by a buildup of the salts of uric acid—a normal by product of the diet—in the joints. A single big toe joint is commonly the affected area and can be extremely painful.



- ☑ Symptoms of arthritis may include Swelling in one or more joints, recurring pain or tenderness in any joint, redness or heat in a joint, limitation in motion of joint, early morning stiffness, skin changes, including rashes and growths.
- ☑ Arthritis may also lead to bunions and can lead to abrasion and ulceration from shoes.
- ☑ Early diagnosis is important to effective treatment of any form of arthritis. If the inflammation of arthritic disease is not treated, both cartilage and bone can be damaged, which makes the joints increasingly difficult to move. Most forms of arthritis cannot be cured but may be controlled or brought into remission.
- ☑ Physical therapy and exercise may be indicated, accompanied by medication. Aspirin is still the first-line drug of choice for most forms of arthritis.
- ☑ Shoe inserts, braces or specially prescribed shoes, may be recommended. Surgical intervention is a last resort in arthritis. Joint replacement is possible for severely damaged joints. Avoid styles of shoes which bind the feet, avoid high heels and pointed toe shoes, and tie shoes loosely, and/or wear wider shoes or box toe shoes.



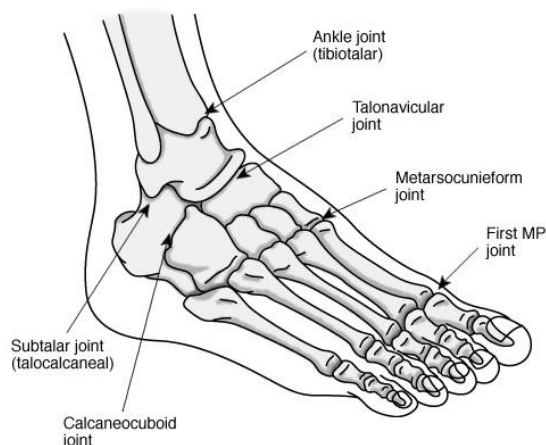
Foot Complications from Diabetes

- △ **Neuropathy:** Nerve damage, which results in loss of feeling in the feet. This lessens the ability to feel pain, heat or cold. Loss of feeling often means you may not feel a foot injury or get a blister and not feel it. Diabetics might not notice a foot injury until the skin breaks down and becomes infected. Nerve damage can also lead to changes in the shape of feet and toes. Special therapeutic shoes and socks are available from health care providers.
- △ **Skin Changes:** Diabetes can cause changes in the skin of the foot. The foot may become very dry and the skin may peel and crack. The nerves that control the oil and moisture in the foot no longer work.
- △ **Calluses:** Calluses occur more often and build up faster on the feet of people with diabetes due to high-pressure areas under the foot. Calluses, if not trimmed, get very thick, break down, and turn into ulcers (open sores). Never cut calluses or corns yourself, do not try to remove calluses and corns with chemical agents as this can lead to ulcers and infection. Using a pumice stone every day will help keep calluses under control. It is best to use the pumice stone on wet skin, and then apply lotion immediately.
- △ **Foot Ulcers:** Ulcers occur most often on the ball of the foot or on the bottom of the big toe. Ulcers on the sides of the foot are usually due to poorly fitting shoes. Every ulcer should be seen by your health care provider as soon as possible. Neglecting ulcers can result in infections. Walking on an ulcer can force the infection deeper into the foot, which in turn can lead to loss of a limb. Good diabetes control is important. High blood glucose levels make it hard to fight infection. Once healed, scar tissue from the ulcer breaks down easily. Special shoes help prevent the ulcer from returning.
- △ **Poor Circulation:** Poor circulation (blood flow) can make your foot less able to fight infection and to heal. Diabetes causes blood vessels of the foot to narrow and harden. Do not smoke as smoking makes arteries harden faster. Keep blood pressure and cholesterol under control. If your feet are cold, wear warm socks. Exercise is good for poor circulation. It stimulates blood flow in the legs and feet.
- △ **Amputation:** Individuals with diabetes are far more likely to have a foot or leg amputated than other people due to artery disease, which reduces blood flow to the feet. Many people with diabetes have nerve disease, which reduces sensation. Together, these problems make it easy to get ulcers and infections that may lead to amputation. Most amputations are preventable with regular care and proper footwear. Ask about prescription shoes and minimum pressure socks. Smoking affects small blood vessels. It can cause decreased blood flow to the feet and make wounds heal slowly. Many diabetics who need amputations are smokers. If you smoke – **QUIT!**



To Summarize

- ❏ Do NOT ignore foot pain - it is not normal!
- ❏ Inspect your feet regularly
- ❏ Wash feet regularly, pat dry
- ❏ Trim toenails straight across
- ❏ Make sure shoes fit properly
- ❏ Select the right shoe for the activity
- ❏ Alternate shoes daily
- ❏ Avoid walking barefoot
- ❏ Wear sun block on your feet
- ❏ Be cautious of home remedies
- ❏ If you have diabetes, see a podiatric physician at least once each year

Resources

American Diabetes Association - www.diabetes.org
 American Podiatric Medical Association - www.apma.org
 APMA Shoe Hollywood Stories
 Foot Health Information - www.foot-health.info
 MedicineNet, Inc. - www.medicinenet.com
 University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics - www.uihealthcare.com
 The Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists - www.feetforlife.org
 USA Weekend, March 7-9, 2008
 WebMD Inc. - www.emedicinehealth.com

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