

Education

Foot Care

Why is foot care important?

People depend on their feet more than they may realize. Over a lifetime, people will walk, on average, about 115,000 miles. It is easy to take healthy feet for granted, but foot problems are actually among the most common health problems. Good foot care can help prevent many of these problems.

What are common foot problems and their causes?

Common foot problems are:

- Achilles tendonitis is a condition of painful ankles that you may have when you wear flat shoes after wearing high heels for many years.
- Athlete's foot is caused by walking barefoot in warm, damp places, such as locker rooms.
- Blisters are usually caused by the rubbing of new shoes or shoes that don't fit well.
- Bunions can occur from wearing narrow shoes with pointed toes and high heels.
- Calluses are caused by repeated rubbing by a shoe.
- Cold feet may be related to smoking, diabetes, or other circulatory problems.
- Corns result from pressure on the toes from tight shoes.
- Foot odor is generally the result of sweaty feet and can usually be prevented with good, daily foot hygiene.
- Hammer toe may be an inherited weakness, but it is made worse by tight shoes.
- Ingrown toenails can be caused by shoe pressure and improper nail trimming.
- Pain and stiffness are often due to arthritis.
- Plantar warts may develop after going barefoot in warm, damp places, such as locker rooms.
- Pump bump (lump on back of heel bone) is caused by rubbing of the heel by low-cut shoes.

Footwear fashions, such as high heels, pointed toes, and shoes that rub or are too tight, cause many foot problems for women.

Foot problems also result from illnesses such as type 2 diabetes and other conditions that affect the flow of blood to the feet, such as smoking.

How should I care for my feet?

- Follow your health care provider's advice if you have foot problems.
- Examine your feet regularly. Check for cuts, scrapes, bruises, calluses, or corns. Swelling or redness may be signs of infection.
- Practice good daily foot care. Wash your feet daily and dry them well. Protect the skin with lotion, moisturizer, or petroleum jelly after you clean your feet.
- Don't go barefoot in warm, damp places such as locker rooms.
- If your feet sweat, use a light dusting powder.
- Don't share towels after exercise or sports activities.
- Change your socks or hose daily, or more often if they get damp. Use cotton socks for exercise or sports activities.
- Wear leather or canvas shoes that allow your feet to breathe.
- Don't wear the same shoes all the time. Let them air out between wearing.
- Trim your toenails straight across, using a nail clipper. Never cut down corners.
- Wear comfortable shoes that fit well and don't rub.
- Avoid narrow, tight shoes with pointed toes.
- Avoid shoes with high heels.
- Exercise daily. Walking is one of the easiest and best exercises. Always wear well-fitting, well-cushioned shoes for walking.
- If you are overweight, work on weight control. Protect the heel cushion and the small joints in your foot when you exercise. Using an exercycle may be easier on your feet than a lot of walking when you are overweight. Check with your health care provider before you start an exercise program.
- If you smoke, quit. Quitting will improve the flow of blood to your feet.

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