

COMMON FOOT PROBLEMS

(AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM!)



THE AVERAGE PERSON TAKES BETWEEN 8,000 AND 10,000 STEPS EACH DAY. IN A LIFETIME, THAT EQUALS 4 TRIPS AROUND THE GLOBE!

WARTS

Common warts, which can appear anywhere on the body, are rough little bumps. Plantar warts, which occur on the bottom of the feet, are typically hard, flat, and rough.

All warts are caused by a virus. Warts aren't harmful, but they can be uncomfortable and unsightly. If you have warts on your feet, keep your feet clean and dry. (Viruses flourish in dark, wet environments.)

SMELLY FEET

Feet sweat. You can cut down on odors by keeping your feet clean and dry at all times. (It's OK to stash some extra socks at school!) Rubbing powder on the bottom of your feet before putting on your socks and shoes can help too.

If possible, let shoes air out for 24 hours before wearing them again. Foot doctors, called podiatrists, can help people with particularly smelly feet.

INGROWN TOENAILS

Symptoms of an ingrown toenail include redness, swelling, and tenderness around the nail. Sometimes you can even see the nail digging directly into the toe. Try soaking the affected foot in lukewarm water and Epsom salts for 20 minutes three or four times a day. If the redness and pain doesn't improve after a couple days, see a doc. Podiatrists can easily treat ingrown toenails.

ATHLETE'S FOOT

Athlete's foot, an itchy foot condition that causes the skin to flake and peel, is caused by a fungus. Keeping your feet clean and dry can help. So can over-the-counter athlete's foot medication. Just be sure to use the medication until the fungus is completely gone. With current medications two to three weeks of treatment may be enough to treat athlete's foot fungus. Otherwise, your athlete's foot is likely to recur. Stubborn cases of athlete's foot may require a doctor's care.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT SHOE

Consider the activity. Basketball shoes are different than ballet shoes for a reason. Sports-specific shoes help protect against injury by providing appropriate support. Basketball shoes, for instance, provide extra ankle support, because the movements from side to side that are typical in basketball put strain on the ankles.

Get fitted. If you need an athletic shoe, visit a store that specializes in athletic footwear. The associates there can help you find a shoe that's appropriate for your foot, the way you walk, and your sport. Look for a shoe that fits your foot, but don't get hung up on size. Shoe sizes, like clothes sizes, can vary from brand to brand. You want a pair of shoes that fits comfortably on the first try. Your feet are not usually the same size. Make sure that you always buy shoes based on your larger foot's size. You should never have to break-in a pair of athletic shoes.

Check for support. The best shoes support your foot, front and back. Backless shoes actually alter the way you walk, and that can cause foot injuries and discomfort down the line. You don't have to give up your flip-flops; you just shouldn't wear them all the time. Look for shoes that are stiff in the middle, but bend

at the ball of the foot. High heels are OK for special occasions. Consider selecting platform or wedge heels instead of stilettos.

Watch for signs of wear. When your shoes start wearing out, it's time for a new pair. Check the tread and midsole, the cushiony part just before the sole. If the shoe displays signs of uneven wear, it's time to look for a new pair of shoes. Athletic shoes should be replaced yearly; running shoes should be replaced every 300–400 miles or so.



LOOK INSIDE for teen foot health tips!

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DITCH THE PAIN!

myfeet

THE AMERICAN PODIATRIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1912, the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA), headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, is the leading resource for foot and ankle health information. Currently, the organization represents a vast majority of podiatrists in the country. In addition to the national headquarters, APMA boasts 53 state component locations throughout the United States and its territories, as well as affiliated societies.

WHERE CAN YOU LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR FEET?

Visit apma.org/myfeet to:

- ☑ Watch videos and learn more about podiatry from the experts themselves.
- ☑ Find a podiatrist near you.
- ☑ Download a patient checklist to help you prepare for a visit with a podiatrist.
- ☑ Use the glossary of foot health terms and find information to help you understand and care for your feet.
- ☑ Discover even more about your feet!

FOOT CARE 101

Keeping your feet healthy can help you avoid embarrassing and uncomfortable problems such as athlete's foot, foot odor, and toenail fungus. Follow these steps for healthy feet:

Wash your feet daily with soap and water. It's tempting to just swish your feet around in the shower, but today's podiatrists say it's important to use soap to remove germs and grime. Don't forget to wash in between your toes!

Keep feet dry. Fungus, including the kind that causes athlete's foot, loves to grow in moist, damp environments, so after your shower, dry your feet thoroughly, paying extra attention to the spaces between your toes. If your socks get wet during the day, change socks. (It's not a bad idea to keep an extra pair in your locker or gym bag!)

Trim toenails into a slight curve. Too-long toenails not only wreck your socks and look crazy, but they can harbor bacteria. Use a pair of toenail clippers to cut your toenails to just above or at the edge of your toe. Some docs will tell you to cut straight across the nail, but a slight curve is OK too.

Wear supportive, properly fitted shoes. Improperly fitted, unsupportive shoes are a major cause of foot pain and injury. Don't worry—you don't have to wear granny shoes to get good support. (Want to know more? Skip ahead to "Choosing the Right Shoe.")



EACH FOOT CONTAINS 26 BONES, 33 JOINTS, 107 LIGAMENTS, 19 MUSCLES, AND COUNTLESS NERVES AND BLOOD VESSELS.

DID YOU KNOW THAT 1/4 OF THE BONES IN YOUR BODY ARE LOCATED IN YOUR FEET? OR THAT YOUR FEET SWEAT UP TO HALF A PINT EACH DAY?

THAT'S CRAZY!

Most people don't think about their feet very often, but feet are the foundation of a healthy, active life. Your feet allow you to walk, run, dance, and play sports.

When your feet are healthy, you're in the middle of the action.

When they're not, you're stuck on the sidelines.

READ ON! →