

# FOOTPRINTS

AN INFORMATIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR PATIENTS OF APMA MEMBER PODIATRISTS

APRIL 2014

SPRING EDITION

## FIRST STEPS: KEEPING KIDS' FEET HEALTHY AND HAPPY



WHEN IT COMES TO THE HEALTH OF YOUR CHILDREN, YOU DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO HELP THEM GROW UP HEALTHY AND STRONG. YOU GET THEM VACCINATED, TAKE THEM TO THE DENTIST AND OPTOMETRIST, AND YOU DO YOUR BEST TO ENSURE THEY EAT A NUTRITIOUS DIET THAT WILL HELP THEM GROW. BUT ARE YOU AWARE OF THE IMPORTANT ROLE FOOT HEALTH PLAYS IN A CHILD'S OVERALL DEVELOPMENT?

“Every parent knows the frustration of trying to keep up with children who grow quickly, and that rapid pace of growth can mean children need new shoes and socks every few months,” says Dr. Matthew G. Garoufalos, a podiatrist and past president of the American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA). “With warm weather on the way, it’s a great time for parents to take a look at their children’s shoes to ensure they’re wearing footwear that will serve them well through the active days of summer.”

Ill-fitting footwear can irritate kids’ feet and aggravate existing conditions caused by injury, heredity, deformity, or illness.

APMA offers parents guidance for keeping kids in shoes that fit properly and protect their feet:

- ☉ Take the child with you and have him or her try on the shoes. Every shoe fits differently, so even if you’re buying your child’s correct size, the shoe still may not be comfortable. Have the child try on footwear with the socks or tights you expect will be worn with the shoes.

- ☉ Always measure a child’s foot before buying new shoes. Children’s feet grow so quickly, their shoe size can literally change from month to month.
- ☉ Shop late in the afternoon when feet are largest, and make sure to fit the shoe to the larger foot. Everyone’s feet swell by the end of the day, and no one has feet that are exactly the same size. One will always be slightly larger.
- ☉ Never buy shoes that are too large or need a “break-in” period. Shoes should be comfortable immediately. “Buying shoes for kids isn’t like buying a too-large coat that you know they’ll grow into,” Dr. Garoufalos says. “Shoes that are too big can irritate a child’s feet and even lead to tripping or injury.”

CONTINUED ON OTHER SIDE

# FIRST STEPS

KEEPING KIDS' FEET  
HEALTHY AND HAPPY

## FIRST STEPS: KEEPING KIDS' FEET HEALTHY AND HAPPY CONT.

- Let kids have a say—within reason. “Of course parents will have to guide children toward good choices,” Dr. Garoufalidis says. “But allowing kids to have a say in the shoe-buying process can help promote healthy foot habits down the road.”

Once your child takes the new shoes home, keep watch to ensure the shoes stay comfortable and in good shape. Examine the child’s feet at the end of the day for signs of irritation. If your child always wants to remove one or both of the shoes, it may mean the shoes are uncomfortable.

Finally, says Dr. Garoufalidis, “Never hand down footwear.”

**“JUST BECAUSE A SHOE SIZE FITS ONE CHILD COMFORTABLY DOESN’T MEAN IT WILL FIT ANOTHER THE SAME WAY,” DR. GAROUFALIS NOTES. “PLUS, SHARING SHOES CAN SPREAD FUNGI LIKE ATHLETE’S FOOT AND NAIL FUNGUS.”**

To learn more about foot health for the whole family, or to find a podiatrist in your area, visit [www.apma.org](http://www.apma.org).

### SPECIAL ISSUE!

THIS MONTH’S EDITION OF FOOTPRINTS INCLUDES A SPECIAL ACTIVITY SHEET FOR KIDS WITH FUN FACTS, A MATCHING GAME, AND ROOM TO DOODLE!

## FOR HEALTHY FEET AT EACH STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT:

### 1 INFANCY (birth to 1 year)

- Look carefully at your baby’s feet. A child’s feet grow rapidly during the first year. For this reason, podiatric physicians consider this period to be the most critical stage of the foot’s development. If you notice something that does not look normal to you, contact a podiatric physician. Most deformities will not correct themselves if left untreated.
- Keep your baby’s feet unrestricted. No shoes or booties are necessary for infants. These can restrict movement and can inhibit toes and feet from normal development.
- Provide an opportunity for exercising the feet. Lying uncovered enables the baby to kick and perform other related motions that prepare the feet for weight bearing.

### 2 TODDLER (1–3 years)

- Keep bare feet indoors. Walking barefoot allows your toddler’s foot to grow normally and to develop its musculature and strength, as well as the grasping action of toes. Of course, when walking outside or on rough surfaces, feet should be protected in lightweight, flexible footwear made of natural materials.
- Assess your child’s walking pattern or gait. It is not uncommon for little ones to walk on their toes. However, persistent toe-walking is not normal. A podiatric physician can examine a child to make a proper diagnosis and determine the best treatment option.
- Pay attention to unspoken signs. If your child is limping, tripping, or always wants to remove one or both shoes, this may be an unspoken sign that the shoes don’t fit properly.

### 3 YOUNG CHILD (4–8 years)

- Take your child shoe shopping. It’s important to have your child’s feet measured before buying shoes. Every shoe fits differently. Letting a child have a say in the shoe-buying process promotes healthy foot habits down the road.
- Never hand down footwear. Just because a shoe size fits one child comfortably doesn’t mean it will fit another the same way. Sharing shoes can spread fungi like athlete’s foot and nail fungus.
- Establish good outdoor footwear practices. Spending summer at the pool? Wear flip-flops around the pool and in the locker room to prevent bacterial infections. Raising a ski bunny? Make sure winter boots fit properly. Kids should be able to wiggle their toes, but boots should immobilize the heel, instep, and ball of their foot to help prevent blisters, chafing, and ankle or foot injuries.

### 4 PRETEEN (9–12 years)

- Play it safe with sports. Sports-related foot and ankle injuries become common as children start participating in athletic activities. Parents should consider discussing these matters with their family podiatric physician if they have children participating in sports.
- Promote healthy pedicures. While many young girls would like a pretty pedicure to match Mom’s, it’s important they learn how to trim and polish nails safely. Visit [www.apma.org](http://www.apma.org) to see a “Pedicure Pointers” tip sheet in the “Learn About Feet” section.
- Buy shoes that are comfortable right away. Kids may see their friends with the latest flashy sneakers or trendy boots, but make sure those styles are comfortable for your child’s foot before purchasing them. Properly fitted shoes should never require a “break-in” period.

DOCTORS OF PODIATRIC MEDICINE ARE PODIATRIC PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, ALSO KNOWN AS PODIATRISTS, QUALIFIED BY THEIR EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND EXPERIENCE TO DIAGNOSE AND TREAT CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE FOOT, ANKLE, AND RELATED STRUCTURES OF THE LEG.



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# FIRST STEPS

KEEPING KIDS' FEET  
HEALTHY AND HAPPY

Draw a picture of a shoe that  
you'd like to wear!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Can you match the shoe to its owner?



## Foot Facts



The average person will walk about 115,000 miles in a lifetime. That's more than four times around the earth!



There are 250,000 sweat glands in a pair of feet. No wonder they can get so stinky!



Most people have one foot that is bigger than the other. Which one of yours is bigger?