



Patient information

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Podiatry Department

Taking Care of Your Feet



Taking care of your feet

Foot Facts

The foot is made up of 26 bones, 19 muscles and around 30 joints, along with a network of blood vessels and nerves.

The average person walks 18,000 steps a day, so it's very important that we look after our feet. Don't wait for problems to arise. Use the following points to take better care of your feet.

Special care

The elderly and those that have medical conditions that can affect the feet, e.g. diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, may be more at risk from foot problems. Their feet should be checked regularly by a podiatrist who will be able to treat any problems present and help to prevent any further ones occurring.

If you intend to visit a podiatrist make sure they are registered with the Health Professions Council (HPC) at www.hpc-uk.org or telephone 020 7582 0866.

For more information on your local podiatry service, contact your health centre.

Hosiery

Tight socks and garters can affect the circulation to your feet so should be avoided. Socks and tights should be changed daily. Socks that are made from cotton are best as they will absorb some perspiration.

Other foot problems

Following the above advice may be all you need to keep your feet healthy. If your feet do start to have other problems, for example corns, callous, ingrowing toenails or bunions, seek professional care from a podiatrist - they will be able to offer advice and treatment if needed.

Sharp instruments should not be used to remove hard skin, nor should chemicals that “soften” hard skin or corn plasters.

Keep your feet clean

An average pair of feet can give off around ½ pint of perspiration a day – more during hot, humid weather or when exercising.

Germs thrive in warm, moist places, so it's important to wash your feet every day in warm, soapy water and dry thoroughly, especially between the toes. Do not soak your feet for longer than 20 minutes as this can dry the skin. Hard skin can also be gently removed with a pumice stone when you wash your feet.

If your skin is dry, rub in a moisturising cream. Don't apply it between the toes as this can make the skin too moist. If the skin is moist in between your toes apply surgical spirit daily.

Check your feet every day

Check in-between the toes, the top, bottom and heel areas making sure you have no cuts or discoloured areas. If you cannot check your own feet, ask a friend or relative to help, alternatively use a mirror.

Nail cutting

Cut or file your nails following the shape of the end of your toe. Don't cut or file nails too short or down into the corners as this can lead to ingrowing toenails.

Footwear

Feet live in footwear for up to 16 hours a day, which is 2/3 of an entire lifetime. Wearing the correct footwear is essential for healthy feet. Ill-fitting shoes will speed up the onset of foot problems and certainly aggravate already existing ones.

Shoes should be long, wide, and deep enough so that your toes move freely. They should also have a lace, buckle or Velcro fastening to hold the heel in place and prevent the shoe from rubbing.

When buying new shoes try and get your feet measured or make a template of your foot by standing on a piece of card and getting someone to draw around your foot. This can be put into the new shoe - if it curls up at the front of the shoe it will show that there isn't enough room in the shoe for your foot.

When trying on new shoes use your fingers to check there is enough room in the front of the shoe for your toes.