

PAINFUL CONDITIONS

Foot pain is not normal, and it shouldn't be ignored. Here are some common foot problems.

Painful ingrown toenails can become infected.

Corns and calluses, caused by pressure from skin rubbing against bony areas, can cause discomfort.

Plantar warts, caused by a virus, attack the soles of your feet and need treatment before they spread. Over-the-counter remedies are available but don't always work.

Bunions, prominent bumps on the inside of the foot around the big toe joint, can cause inflammation, swelling and soreness on the side surface of the big toe, causing you to walk improperly. Surgery by an orthopedist or podiatrist (a doctor specializing in disorders of the feet) may be required.

Caution: Don't try to self-treat these medical conditions. See an orthopedist or podiatrist.

First Aid for Your Feet

Proper first aid can make a difference in getting your feet healthy again.

For sprains and severe bruising, use ice to treat an injury since it produces a numbing effect and prevents swelling and pain. Wrap the ice or ice pack in a towel — don't put it directly on your skin. Use a 20-minutes-on, 40-minutes-off cycle. Get off your feet if you can. Lightly wrap an Ace bandage around the area, and elevate your foot higher than your waist. Don't use hot water or a heating pad to treat a foot or ankle injury, as this can cause increased swelling.

For bleeding, clean the wound and apply pressure with a towel and cover with a clean dressing. Don't use any medication until you see a doctor.

Foreign material in the skin, such as slivers and splinters, should be removed carefully. Deep objects such as broken glass must be removed by a doctor.

Pain-Fighting Exercises

One great way to avoid foot pain, especially if you work on your feet, is to get them strong and flexible with these exercises.

1. Foot Roll: Roll a tennis ball under each bare foot. Be sure to cover the entire surface of your sole. This massages your foot.

2. Toe Stretch: Stretch your toes away from each other as far as they will go, hold for a few seconds, and then relax.

3. Foot Curls: Curl your toes under and gently press the tops of your feet against the floor. Then, curl your toes upward while keeping the rest of each foot on the floor. This stretches out the top and bottom of each foot.

4. Big Toe Pull: Loop a rubber band around your big toes and gently pull your feet away from each other. Keep your feet straight; don't rotate them toward each other from the ankles.

Happy Feet? No Sweat!

Keep your feet clean and dry. Sweaty feet provide a good place for fungus and bacteria to thrive, leading to athlete's foot or infection. Sprinkle your feet with foot powder, wear cotton socks and, if your job requires you to work around water, wear waterproof shoes or boots. If you have a problem with foot odor or fungus, visit a podiatrist or other foot specialist to help determine the cause.

Final thought:

Your feet are one of your body's hardest-working parts. Take care of them and they will thank you for a lifetime.

Safety on Your Feet



Every Step You Take

If you think that wearing shoes is enough to protect your feet from injury, think again. Nearly 180,000 disabling foot and toe injuries occur each year in the American workplace. Protect your feet with every step you take and each task you perform.

The Hazards

Among the hazards that can harm your feet in the workplace, impact hazards are most common.

A typical impact injury is caused by objects weighing about 65 pounds falling a distance of less than four feet. Be aware of other dangers, such as:

- Rolling objects
- Electrical hazards
- Objects that could puncture the sole of your footwear
- Extreme cold or heat and moisture
- Slips and slides on oily or wet surfaces
- Sparks and molten metal splashes

YOUR AMAZING FEET

Each foot has 33 joints, 107 ligaments and 19 muscles and tendons to hold it together. The 52 bones in your feet make up about one-quarter of all the bones in your body.

If the Shoe Fits

Does it pay to make sure your protective footwear fits? Absolutely.

If protective shoes don't fit correctly in the first place, you won't want to wear them. And if you stand or walk on hard surfaces for hours each day, you'll want your shoes to be just as comfortable at the end of your day as they are at the beginning. Here's how to ensure a good fit so you can put your best foot forward:

- ✓ Never buy shoes without trying them on and walking in them. Be sure to try on both shoes, as one foot usually is slightly larger than the other.
- ✓ Don't assume the footwear will "break in." Shoes will not stretch to fit. If they don't fit now, they won't fit later.
- ✓ Make sure you have sufficient foot clearance at the toe.

- ✓ Judge shoes by the fit, not by the size marked inside. Shoe sizes can vary among brands and styles.
- ✓ Check that boots fit snugly around the heel and ankle when laced up fully.
- ✓ Inspect boots for good-quality insulation to make sure they won't lose their bulk.
- ✓ Make sure there is room for extra socks or special arch supports if needed.
- ✓ Try on shoes at the end of the day, after your feet have swollen and are at their largest.

Remember: Wearing comfortable footwear helps you feel less tired during long workdays, decreasing your chances of a fatigue-related accident.

Footcare Myths Debunked

Myth: Go barefoot. It's good for your feet.

Fact: Going barefoot increases the risk of injury and infection and provides no support for your foot or ankle. Stepping on a sharp object and cutting your foot on broken glass are just two of the dangers your feet could encounter.

Myth: Ignore a broken toe because it will just heal on its own.

Fact: X-rays are necessary to reveal whether it's a simple or displaced fracture. Prompt realignment of the fracture may be needed for complete healing.

Myth: My foot or ankle can't be broken because I can move it.

Fact: Many fractures don't receive proper treatment because, the truth is, you can walk with certain types of small fractures of the foot and ankle bone.



Prevent Accidents

Shoes and boots are a type of personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep your feet safe. Your occupation determines the type of footwear required for the best protection.

Choices:

- Steel-toe safety shoes with steel puncture-resistant inserts
- Natural rubber, vinyl or plastic footwear for protection from strong chemicals
- Soles of synthetic rubber, neoprene, cord or cork that resist corrosive oils
- Rubber shoes or boots for occasional wetness
- Electrical hazard shoes, which protect against shock hazards that may result from contact with open circuits of 600 volts or less under dry conditions
- Shoes with heat-resistant soles and leather uppers for flame resistance

Remember: Most work-related foot injuries occur because workers are not wearing safety footwear, or they are wearing the wrong type for the job.

Always on Your Feet?

Recent research found that sheer support stockings or panty hose (or for men, support socks), can reduce leg and foot discomfort in people who stand for extended periods, especially on hard floors. Support hose keep blood from pooling in feet and ankles, reducing swelling.

(Source: Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise)