

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.

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 both shoes on, as one foot is slightly larger than the other, typically.
- Don't assume the footwear will "break in." Shoes will not stretch to fit your foot. If they don't fit now, they won't fit later.
- Judge shoes by the fit, not by the size marked inside. Shoes vary among brands and styles.
- Make sure you have sufficient foot clearance at the steel toe.
- 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 prevents tiring 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 or 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.

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 falling fewer than four feet and weighing about 65 pounds. 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 skids on oily or wet surfaces
Sparks and molten metal splashes

PREVENT ACCIDENTS

Shoes and boots are a type of personal protection equipment (PPE) to guard your feet's safety. 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 workers are injured because they are not wearing safety footwear, or are wearing the wrong type for the job.

Painful Conditions

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

Painful ingrown toenails, which 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.

Your Amazing Feet!

Each foot has 33 joints, 107 ligaments, 19 muscles and tendons to hold your foot together.



The 52 bones in your feet make up about one-quarter of all the bones in your body.

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-minute-on, 40-minute-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 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 splinters and splinters should be removed carefully. Deep objects such as broken glass must be removed by a doctor.