

Getting to Know Your Feet Overview

General Information

Did you know the human foot contains 26 bones (one-quarter the number of bones in the body), 33 joints, 100 tendons, muscles and ligaments, 250,000 sweat glands, and hundreds of thousands of miles of blood vessels, including arteries, veins, and capillaries? Small in comparison to our legs or arms, each foot carries half the weight of our body. In addition, an average day of walking exerts several hundred pounds of pressure on each foot. Learning to talk care of these miniature marvels is important for general overall health.

Good Foot Care

Good foot care includes some common day-to-day practices:

- Do not ignore foot pain. Foot pain is not normal. It can be a sign of foot illness or injury. See your health care provider for a proper diagnosis.
- Inspect your feet on a daily basis. Look at your feet for color, texture, and temperature changes. Look for signs of excessive dryness, redness, paleness, any sores or open lesions, cracks in the skin, scaly areas, and corns and calluses.
- Inspect your toenails when doing your foot inspection. Look for thick or discolored nails (yellow or blue/purple, or pale nails) or any abnormal looking or painful toenail.
- Perform routine nail care. Trim your toenails straight across. Do not cut them too short. Do not cut the corners of your toenails because this may lead to ingrown toenails. Carefully file your toenails to make sure you do not leave jagged edges.
- Make sure you wear properly fitting shoes. Buy new shoes later in the day because your feet will be at their largest.
- Replace worn out shoes on a regular basis.
- Match your shoes to your activity: walking shoes for walking, running shoes for running.
- Alternate your shoes daily.
- Avoid walking barefoot. You may step on sharp objects and injure your feet, sometimes without knowing it.
- Avoid home remedies for foot ailments. Consult your health care provider for a list of medications you can use.
- Persons with diabetes, poor circulation, high blood pressure, kidney disease, or heart problems should see a health care provider for foot and nail care because of the increased risk of injury and infection.

Following these tips may save you time and money in the long run and will promote good foot health.

Adapted for use in Kentucky from the American Podiatry Medical Association (2008). General Foot Health. Available online at http://www.apma.org/s_apma/doc.asp?CID=371&DID=9406.

This is a publication in an eight-part series on **Getting to Know Your Feet**. Other publications in this series are:

- Common Foot Ailments: HSW-PAR.821
- Aging Feet: HSW-PAR.822
- Arthritis: HSW-PAR.823
- Diabetes: HSW-PAR.824
- Injuries: HSW-PAR.825
- Information for Women: HSW-PAR.826
- Walking for Health: HSW-PAR.827

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