

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOT CARE

We generally don't give our feet much thought – that is, until they start to protest by becoming painful! They are vital to our mobility so the importance of regular foot care cannot be overemphasised.

There are some foot conditions that occur which are outside our control. However, by following a few simple guidelines you can greatly reduce your chances of developing common problems with your feet, helping you stay active, mobile and pain-free well into old age.

HYGIENE

Keep your feet clean daily – wash and dry thoroughly, particularly between the toes. If you find the areas between your toes are moist check that your footwear is breathable and try a dab of surgical spirit to help dry the skin out. Change your hosiery daily and try to rotate your footwear.

FOOTWEAR

Wear breathable shoes that have some form of fastening – laces or Velcro, for example. Ensure that they don't squeeze your feet around the sides, that they support your heel, and that there is around 1cm of space between your toes and the end of the shoes.

Ensure your footwear keeps your feet warm in winter if you are prone to circulation problems. Avoid wearing heels that are narrow or too high (over 4cm) for prolonged periods.

SKIN AND NAILS

Keep your skin supple and healthy by applying moisturiser on a daily basis, particularly around the heels (but not between the toes). Use a file or pumice stone to gently reduce hard skin or callus. Look out for any wounds, rashes or signs of infection – contact your podiatrist if you notice anything unusual.

Trim your nails regularly following a gentle curve – do not dig down the sides and avoid cutting them too short as this can often make them sore or vulnerable to infection.

EXERCISE

Try to remain active – your muscles, ligaments and joints in your feet all benefit from regular exercise or stretching. Your podiatrist can advise you.

WARNING SIGNS

If you notice an area of your foot or toe that is painful, red, hot or swollen it may indicate an infection or injury. If it has rapidly developed after some kind of trauma, such as a fall, then you should attend A&E at your local hospital.

If there is an open wound, skin lesion, or nail problem (such as ingrown toenails), and the area is also weeping then it is probably infected and you might need antibiotics. Call your podiatrist straightaway to make an urgent appointment.

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about the problem with your foot. This leaflet is not a substitute for professional medical advice and should be used in conjunction with verbal information and treatment given.