

# Healthy Feet for an Active Life

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How do we treat our feet? We treat our face and hands to endless pampering, but we seem to forget about caring for our feet. We wear ill-fitting shoes, and then we complain when our feet hurt. We are encouraged to walk 10,000 steps a day to stay fit and healthy. If those 10,000 steps are taken with feet that are not cared for and shoes that do not fit properly, then we may be doing more damage than good.

Osteoarthritis is one of the most common age-related ailments, resulting from joint inflammation. There are more than 30 joints in your feet. If arthritis develops in one or more of these joints, both your walking and balance may be affected.

Years of wear and tear can be hard on the feet. So can disease, poor circulation, improperly trimmed toenails, and wearing shoes that don't fit properly. Foot problems can be the first sign of more serious problems and medical conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, and nerve and circulatory disorders.

## Proper Care for Your Feet

- Wash your feet daily. Rinse off all soap and dry them thoroughly. Be sure to dry between your toes.
- Trim your nails straight across and not too short. Do not cut into the corners.

- Do not trim, shave, or use over-the-counter medicines to dissolve corns or calluses.
- Change socks or stockings daily. Do not wear socks that are too short or are tight.
- Wear shoes that fit.

## Shoes that Fit

What does wearing shoes that fit really mean? We know that wearing shoes with pointy toes or high heels is not good for our feet, but what should we do?

- Shoe sizes vary according to brand and style. Before buying shoes, make sure there is a little more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  inch of room between the tip of your big toe and the end of the shoe when you are standing. Shoes should be wide enough to allow you to wiggle your toes and deep enough so that your toes don't rub against the upper part of the shoe.
- The size of your feet changes as you grow older so always have your feet measured before buying shoes. The best time to measure your feet and shop for shoes is at the end of the day when your feet are their largest. Both feet should be measured because they are often different sizes. Always buy shoes for the biggest foot.
- Only you can tell if shoes fit. If they are not comfortable, don't buy them. Always try on both shoes. Don't buy shoes that feel too tight and expect them to stretch to fit. Walk in the shoes to make sure they fit and feel right. Then take them home and spend some time walking on carpet to make sure the fit is a good one. Your heel should fit comfortably in the shoe with a minimum amount of slipping; the shoes should not ride up and down on your heel when you walk.



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## Shoe Construction

- The upper part of the shoe should be made of a soft, flexible material to match the shape of your foot. Leather is best because it breathes like skin, molds to your feet, and can reduce the possibility of skin irritations.
- Soles should provide solid footing and not be slippery. They should be strong and flexible and have a good gripping surface. Thick soles can cushion your feet on hard surfaces.
- Insoles should be cushioned to absorb the jolts of walking on hard surfaces. Proper arch supports distribute weight over a wider area.

## Top 10 Foot Health Tips



Diseases, disorders, and disabilities of the foot or ankle affect the quality of life and mobility of millions of Americans. However, most people and even many physicians are unaware of the important relationship between foot health

and overall health and well-being. The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) has suggested the following tips to keep your feet healthy.

1. Don't ignore foot pain – it is not normal. If pain persists, see your physician or a podiatric physician.
2. Inspect your feet regularly. Pay attention to changes in color and temperature. Look for thick or discolored nails and check for cracks or cuts in the skin. Growths on the foot are not considered normal.
3. Wash your feet regularly, especially between the toes; be sure to dry them completely.

4. Trim toenails straight across. Do not cut nails in the corners; doing so can lead to ingrown toenails.
5. Make sure that your shoes fit properly.
6. Select and wear the right shoe for your activity (for example, running shoes for running).
7. Alternate shoes – don't wear the same pair of shoes every day.
8. Avoid walking barefooted – your feet will be more prone to injury and infection. When you're at the beach or wearing sandals, always use sunblock on your feet just as on the rest of your body.
9. Be cautious when using home remedies for foot ailments; self-treatment can often turn a minor problem into a major one.
10. If you are a person with diabetes, it is vital that you see a podiatric physician at least once a year for a checkup.

## References

American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society

[www.aofas.org](http://www.aofas.org)

American Podiatric Medical Association

1-800-FOOTCARE

[www.apma.org](http://www.apma.org)

Footcare Direct

[www.footcaredirect.com/gen\\_tips.html](http://www.footcaredirect.com/gen_tips.html)

National Institute on Aging

1-800-222-2225

[www.nih.gov/nia](http://www.nih.gov/nia)