

Foot Notes

FALL 2015

HEALTHY FEET FOR AN ACTIVE LIFE

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Remember the Importance of Diabetic Foot Care

November is National Diabetes Awareness Month and a good time to remind everyone with the disease about the importance of taking good care of your feet.

Diabetes can be dangerous to your feet. To avoid serious foot problems, follow these prevention tips:

- ▶ **Inspect your feet daily.** Check for cuts, blisters, redness, swelling, bleeding or nail problems. Use a magnifying hand mirror to look at the bottoms of your feet (if your eyesight is poor, ask someone to check your feet for you). Call our office to schedule an appointment if you notice any unusual symptoms.
- ▶ **Wash your feet in lukewarm water.** Keep your feet clean by washing them daily in lukewarm, not hot, water. If you have numbness in your toes or feet, test the water temperature with your elbow.
- ▶ **Cut nails carefully and straight across.** Don't cut nails too short since this could cause ingrown toenails. Also, file nail edges.
- ▶ **Never trim corns or calluses.** Don't perform "bathroom surgery"—let your foot and ankle surgeon do the job. Don't use sharp instruments to cut at anything on your feet. Even small cuts can lead to big problems.
- ▶ **Moisturize your feet.** Use a moisturizer daily to keep dry skin from itching or cracking. However, don't use moisturizer between your toes, as this could lead to fungal infection.
- ▶ **Wear socks to bed.** If your feet get cold at night, wear thin socks without tight elastic bands. Never use a heating pad or a hot water bottle to keep your feet warm in bed. Cold feet can be a sign of poor circulation—bring this up with your physician.
- ▶ **Keep your feet warm and dry.** Don't get your feet wet in snow or rain. Wear warm socks and shoes in the winter and also make sure your footwear is dry before putting it on.
- ▶ **Shake out your shoes and boots before wearing.** You may not always feel something in your shoe, so be sure to look inside before putting them on. Do this several times a day in case you pick something up inside your shoe during the day.
- ▶ **Get regular checkups at our office.** We can help you prevent diabetic foot complications before they start.

If you or your family members have diabetes, schedule an appointment with our office so we can make sure your feet are in tiptop shape for the winter.

Prepare Your Feet for Autumn Hikes

As the days become cooler, many are lacing up their hiking boots and heading to the trails to take in the brilliant fall foliage. However, outdoor enthusiasts aren't always aware of the beating their feet can take with constant and vigorous hiking on uneven terrain. Walking up and down steep hills and on slippery surfaces can put stress on the muscles and tendons in the feet and ankles.

The good news is that with a little preparation, you can avoid problems, such as heel pain, ankle sprains and Achilles tendon injuries, when taking your autumn hikes.

Wear the Right Shoes

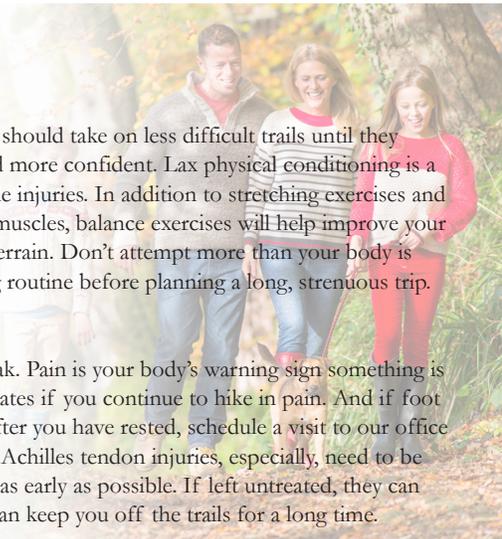
Cross-training athletic shoes don't offer the support needed for hiking on uneven, steep and slippery terrain. Investing in strong, stiff-soled, well-insulated and moisture-proof hiking boots will lessen the stress on muscles and tendons and will reduce the risk of injury.

Easy Does It

Hiking is like skiing; beginners should take on less difficult trails until they become better conditioned and more confident. Lax physical conditioning is a primary cause of foot and ankle injuries. In addition to stretching exercises and strengthening of foot and leg muscles, balance exercises will help improve your ability to traverse challenging terrain. Don't attempt more than your body is ready for; ease into your hiking routine before planning a long, strenuous trip.

Listen to Your Body

If you start hurting, take a break. Pain is your body's warning sign something is wrong. Serious injury risk escalates if you continue to hike in pain. And if foot or ankle pain continues even after you have rested, schedule a visit to our office as soon as possible. Ankle and Achilles tendon injuries, especially, need to be properly evaluated and treated as early as possible. If left untreated, they can lead to serious problems that can keep you off the trails for a long time.



Avoid Injuries When Playing Indoor Sports

With chillier weather on the way, many people shift their focus to indoor sports. However, playing basketball, volleyball or tennis on the hard surface of an indoor court can increase the risk of injury to the feet or ankles.

One of the most common injuries is an ankle sprain, often caused by the fast, lateral movements in court sports or, especially in basketball, by stepping on a competitor's foot. Ankle sprains are often undertreated, which can lead to chronic pain and weakness in the ankle. When in doubt, take it easy and follow the **RICE protocol: Rest, Ice Compression, Elevation**, until your foot and ankle surgeon can provide the proper treatment.

Stress fractures may result from the shock of feet landing on hard surfaces. These small but troublesome fractures can be hard to detect, and many times, people continue to play with the pain and delay diagnosis and treatment.

The heel is another common injury site. Heel pain can indicate a plantar fascia injury or bone spur. The plantar fascia is a thin, strong tissue band that supports the arch and stretches from the heel to the ball of the foot. Over time and with repeated shocks, microevents can occur and can cause the fascia to tear from the heel, resulting in bone spurs.

Appropriate stretching, warm-ups, as well as Achilles and calf stretches can help prevent Achilles tendon injuries in those playing court sports.

If you experience foot or ankle pain while playing indoor court sports this fall, contact our office for an appointment so we can diagnose and treat your injury and help get you back in the game.

