

Bathroom Briefs

Your line to good health!

Developed by: Health Promotion & Disease Prevention
Section, Forsyth County Department of Public Health



April is National Foot Health Awareness Month

As all creatures, great and small awaken from winter's sleep, we are reminded that April is **National Foot Health Awareness Month**. The *American Podiatric Medical Association* recommends to keep your feet healthy to be physically active. You should be familiar with the most common ills that affect the feet.

Athlete's foot is a skin disease, usually starting between the toes or on the bottom of the feet, which can spread to other parts of the body. It is caused by a fungus that commonly attacks the feet. The signs of athlete's foot are dry scaly skin, itching, inflammation, and blisters. You can help prevent infection by washing your feet daily with soap and warm water; drying carefully, especially between the toes; and changing shoes and hose regularly to decrease moisture.

Blisters are caused by skin friction. Don't pop them. Apply moleskin or an adhesive bandage over a blister, and leave it on until it falls off naturally in the bath or shower. Keep your feet dry. If a blister breaks on its own, wash the area, apply an anti-septic, and cover with a sterile bandage.

Corns and calluses are protective layers of compacted, dead skin cells. They are caused by repeated friction and pressure from skin rubbing against bony areas or against an irregularity in a shoe. Corns ordinarily form on the toes and calluses on the soles of the feet. The friction and pressure can burn or otherwise be painful and may be relieved by moleskin or padding on the affected areas. Never cut corns or calluses with any instrument.

Foot odor results from excessive perspiration from the more than 250,000 sweat glands in the foot. Daily hygiene is essential. Change your shoes daily to let each pair air out, and change your socks, perhaps even more frequently than daily. Foot powders and antiperspirants, and soaking your feet in vinegar and water, can help lessen odor.

Heel spurs are growths of bone on the underside of the heel bone. They can occur without pain; pain may result when inflammation develops at the point where the spur forms. Both heel pain and heel spurs are often associated with plantar fasciitis, an inflammation of the long band of connective tissue running from the heel to the ball of the foot. Treatments may range from exercise and custom-made orthotics to anti-inflammatory medication or cortisone injections.



Ingrown nails are nails whose corners or sides dig painfully into the skin, often causing infection. They are frequently caused by improper nail trimming but also by shoe pressure, injury, fungus infection, heredity, and poor foot structure. Toenails should be trimmed straight across, slightly longer than the end of the toe, with toenail clippers. If the ingrown portion of the nail is painful or infected, your podiatric physician may remove the affected portion; if the condition reoccurs frequently, your podiatrist may permanently remove the nail.



Diseases, disorders and disabilities of the foot or ankle affect the quality of life and mobility of millions of Americans. However, the general public and even many physicians are

unaware of the important relationship between foot health and overall health and well-being.

Foot Health Tips

- Don't ignore foot pain—it's not normal. If the pain persists, see a podiatric physician.
- Inspect your feet regularly. Pay attention to changes in color and temperature of your feet. Look for thick or discolored nails (a sign of developing fungus), and check for cracks or cuts in the skin. Any growth on the foot is not considered normal.
- Wash your feet regularly, especially between the toes, and be sure to dry them completely.
- Trim toenails straight across, but not too short. Be careful not to cut nails in corners or on the sides; it can lead to ingrown toenails. Persons with diabetes, poor circulation, or heart problems should not treat their own feet because they are more prone to infection.
- Make sure that your shoes fit properly. Purchase new shoes later in the day when feet tend to be at their largest and replace worn out shoes as soon as possible. Select and wear the right shoe for the activity that you are engaged in (i.e., running shoes for running).
- Alternate shoes—don't wear the same pair of shoes every day.
- Avoid walking barefooted—your feet will be more prone to injury and infection. At the beach or when wearing sandals, always use sunblock on your feet just as on the rest of your body.
- If you are a person with diabetes, it is vital that you see a podiatric physician at least once a year for a check-up.

The APMA states that self-treatment can often turn a minor problem into a major one and is generally not advisable. You should see a podiatric physician when any of the following conditions occur or persist. For more information, visit www.apma.org or your local podiatrist.

Source: *American Podiatric Medical Association*