

Feet - relief for pain and injury

There are many factors that can cause foot and leg pain and injury. A critical factor is the repetitive way in which the feet and legs move. Podiatrists assess abnormalities in foot and leg movement – as well as techniques, surfaces and footwear – when determining causes and treatment of foot and leg pain.

Shin splints

'Shin splints' is a term covering a number of common pains that occur in the shin area during or after sport. The pain can come from a variety of structures in the shin area, including tendon, muscle, bone and ligaments, and occurs at the point where muscle attaches to bone at the front or inside of the shin.

Causes of shin pain

Shin pain usually occurs because of poor biomechanics (the way the foot and leg move while running or playing sport), poor training techniques or, in some cases, over-training. The surface you are running or playing your sport on can also impact on these injuries. A podiatrist would consider all of these elements when assessing your shin pain and determining the best remedy.

Warming and stretching before exercise

Warming up and stretching before sport, and cooling down and stretching afterwards, can help prevent shin pain.

Foot pain

Many people have pain in the base of their foot. This could be due to overuse of one of many different structures in your foot. Common examples are sesamoiditis (inflammation of structures surrounding two small bones under the big toe joint) and plantar fasciitis (overuse of a ligament-like structure which runs underneath the length of the foot).

Pain on standing first thing in the morning is a classic symptom of plantar fasciitis. It is one of the most common problems experienced by runners, accounting for about 10 per cent of running injuries. It is also a common issue for middle-aged people, particularly if they are overweight. It often starts with low-grade pain in the arch or heel of the foot and can get worse over weeks or months.

Causes and treatment for foot pain

Foot pain is usually caused by a mechanical problem with your feet. Treatment includes rectifying poor foot biomechanics, muscle imbalances, poor training techniques and incorrect footwear.

A podiatrist may prescribe an insole and assess your footwear. Persistent problems may require a cortisone injection or surgery. However, it is important to note that most people with plantar fasciitis don't need injections or surgery.

Flat feet and fallen arches

Flat feet and fallen arches are terms used to describe lowering of the long inner arch of the foot.

For a long time, flat feet were thought to be the sign of a poorly developed or structured foot. However, in recent years, it has been found that people with flat feet function generally well and there aren't many foot problems that are linked to a flat foot.

The most critical factor in foot soreness and injury is the way you walk and move, not how flat or high your arches are. If your feet move abnormally while you are walking or standing, this can make you more prone to injuries and foot soreness.

Where to get help

- A podiatrist
- Your doctor
- Australian Podiatry Association (Vic). Tel. (03) 9286 1885

Things to remember

- Foot and leg pain are common and can be relieved.
- Pain may be caused by abnormalities in the movement of your feet or legs, poor technique or incorrect footwear.
- A podiatrist will assess the cause of foot and leg pain and recommend treatment.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

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