
Foot care - podiatrists

Podiatrists are experts in assessing, diagnosing and managing foot conditions. Good foot health is very important for people of all ages.

Common foot problems

Some of the more common foot problems that podiatrists treat include:

- Skin problems
- Calluses and corns
- Nail disorders, like ingrown toenails
- Foot injuries
- Foot infections
- Overuse injuries of the foot and ankle

People with diabetes are at risk of foot problems

People with diabetes are more likely to develop serious foot problems because the condition may lead to:

- Reduced blood flow to the feet, which makes cuts and abrasions slow to heal
- Damaged nerves in the foot, which result in a reduced ability to feel minor trauma.

People with diabetes should:

- Have at least an annual foot check-up with a podiatrist
- Check their feet daily for cuts, blisters, bruises or signs of injury, which they may not have felt happening
- Seek advice or treatment from a podiatrist before trying to manage foot problems (such as corns, calluses or ingrown nails) themselves.

Foot problems and older people

Podiatrists can help older people stay active by keeping their feet healthy. Some older people are unable to look after their feet because they have poor vision and limited flexibility.

Some common problems treated by podiatrists include:

- Skin problems
- Nail problems, such as thickened or deformed nails that are difficult to cut
- Soft tissue disorders, like sore arches
- Arthritis.

Foot injuries in sport

Some of the more common sporting injuries that podiatrists treat are:

- Stress fractures of bones (these are caused by too much activity)
- Arch pain (plantar fasciitis)

- Inflammation of the tendon at the back of the ankle (Achilles tendonopathy)
- Pain at the base of the big toe (sesamoiditis).

Many foot problems start in childhood

Podiatrists can help with the correct foot development of children of all ages, including:

- Infants who are just starting to walk
- Older children.

Pick the right shoes for your feet

Podiatrists can advise about how to choose the right shoes for your feet. People who spend long periods of time on their feet, or those with arthritis, may have special footwear needs.

A good shoe should have:

- A firm heel counter that fits snugly around the back of the foot to avoid slipping during walking.
- Sufficient depth and width at the toes. There should always be a short space between the tip of the longest toe and the end of the shoe.
- An upper made from a natural material, such as leather, that allows the foot to 'breathe'.
- A sole made from a material like rubber. This provides good shock absorption and is less slippery than leather.

Inserts for shoes

Podiatrists sometimes prescribe orthoses, which are custom-made shoe inserts. These help to:

- Align the structure of the foot in the most stable and efficient position for walking
- Reduce pain in the feet and in joints like the knees and hips.

Where to get help

- The Australian Podiatry Association (Vic) Tel. (03) 9826 1885

Things to remember

- Good foot health is important for people of all ages.
- Podiatrists are university trained professionals who treat foot conditions and can perform surgery.
- Members of the Australian Podiatry Association are bound by a code of ethics.
- You don't need a referral to see a podiatrist.

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

La Trobe University - Department of Podiatry

Content on this website is provided for education and information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not imply endorsement and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. Content has been prepared for Victorian residents and wider Australian audiences, and was accurate at the time of publication. Readers should note that, over time, currency and completeness of the information may change. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2012 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.