

## Foot odour - causes and cures

Foot odour is a common problem, caused by excessive perspiration and the growth of bacteria on the feet. Even the most fastidiously clean people can suffer from foot odour. There are a range of simple treatments available to address this problem.

### Feet are a breeding ground for bacteria

Each foot has 250,000 sweat glands and produces about a cup (500 ml) of sweat daily. Excessive perspiration, combined with bacteria, can cause offensive foot odour. The bacteria that grow on the soles of feet actually produce gases similar to those released by bacteria used in producing cheese; hence the name 'cheesy feet'.

### Treating foot odour

To reduce the growth of bacteria and to treat the problem, the sweaty warm conditions around the foot should be eliminated.

The following treatments may be useful, depending on the cause of the problem:

- Mild antiseptic solutions or soaps
- Methylated spirits applied once or twice a day (especially between the toes) can help dry the skin (don't use if the skin between your toes is broken).
- Avoid synthetic socks and wear shoes that allow good air circulation and let your feet breathe (leather is good).
- Moisture-wicking socks may help, or take an extra pair of socks to school or work to change over.
- Change your shoes regularly to allow them to dry and air.
- Topical (applied to the skin) or oral (by mouth) antibiotics may be prescribed, in severe cases, to kill off the bacteria.

If these treatments fail, contact a podiatrist.

### Where to get help

- Local podiatrist
- Your doctor
- Community health centre
- Australian Podiatry Association (Vic) Tel. (03) 9826 1885

### Things to remember

- Foot odour is a common problem.
- There are many simple treatments available.

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

La Trobe University - Department of Podiatry

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