
Foot problems - treatments

Feet are prone to aches and pains, and a variety of problems and conditions. These can include corns and calluses, tinea, bunions, papillomas and ingrown toenails. Most foot problems are easy to avoid and simple to treat. People with diabetes are more likely to develop serious foot problems.

Corns and calluses

Corns and calluses are caused by pressure and friction, usually through poor-fitting shoes.

Avoiding and treating corns and calluses

- Wear shoes that fit properly to relieve the pressure and friction
- Use a moisturiser on the affected areas
- Ask a podiatrist about other treatments.

Tinea

Tinea is easy to catch and is often picked up in public areas, such as communal showers. It usually develops between the toes and along the arch of the foot. The skin can change in appearance, becoming red, moist, and itchy, sometimes developing small blisters.

Avoiding tinea

- Wear shoes whenever you are in public areas
- Wear thongs in public showers.

Treatment for tinea

- Anti-fungal creams are available from your pharmacist.
- Ask a podiatrist about other treatments.

Bunions

Bunions are a foot deformity in which the big toe joint of the foot becomes prominent as a result of the big toe leaning inwards. The joint is easily inflamed by pressure and can be very painful.

Treatment for bunions

- Wear shoes that fit properly and do not have a high heel.
- Ask a podiatrist for advice.
- Sometimes surgical correction may be required.

Papillomas

Papillomas, also known as warts, are caused by a virus. They are commonly picked up in humid communal environments such as public showers and swimming pools.

Preventing papillomas

- Wear thongs in public places, such as showers and pools.

Treatment for papillomas

Papillomas can often resolve without treatment. However, treatment is often recommended to minimise the risk of the infection spreading. Over-the-counter preparations are available from the pharmacist. Seek advice from a podiatrist as many different treatment options are available.

Ingrown toenails

Ingrown toenails generally occur due to poor nail cutting technique, abnormal nail shape or poorly fitted footwear.

Preventing ingrown toenails

- Do not cut nails into the corners – this can leave a spike of nail that can embed itself into or irritate the flesh next to the nail. If you do have to cut your toenails into the corners, make sure that a nail spike is not left behind.
- Make sure that you and your children wear shoes that fit properly.

Treatment of ingrown toenails

Some people have toenails that are prone to ingrowing regardless of how they cut them. In these cases, the only permanent solution is to remove the outer margins of the nail through a minor surgical procedure. Seek advice from a podiatrist.

People with diabetes have a greater risk of serious foot problems

The main risk factors for the feet of people with diabetes are:

- Impaired circulation can delay healing.
- Nerve damage can cause people to lose sensation in their feet. This means a person may not know that their shoe is rubbing or that they have cut their foot.

People with diabetes should check their feet daily for cuts, blisters, bruises or signs of injury. Wear appropriately fitted shoes that protect feet from injury.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your local community health centre
- A podiatrist
- Australian Podiatry Association (Vic) – to find a podiatrist in your local area Tel. (03) 9286 1885

Things to remember

- Most common foot problems can be easily avoided and simply treated.
- Make sure that you and your children wear shoes that fit properly and support your feet.
- People with diabetes should check their feet daily and have them assessed by a podiatrist at least once a year.

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

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