
Foot care - podiatrists

Summary

- Good foot health is important for people of all ages.
 - Podiatrists are university trained professionals who treat foot conditions.
 - All podiatrists can perform minor nail surgery and podiatry surgeons can perform foot surgery.
 - All podiatrists must be registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.
 - Members of the Australian Podiatry Association are bound by a code of ethics.
 - You don't need a referral to see a podiatrist.
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Podiatrists are experts in assessing, diagnosing and managing foot conditions. Good foot health is very important for people of all ages.

Podiatrists treat common foot problems

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

- skin problems
- calluses and corns
- nail disorders, such as ingrown toenails
- foot injuries
- foot infections
- overuse injuries of the foot and ankle.

See a podiatrist if you have diabetes

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.

If you have diabetes be sure to:

- have at least an annual foot check-up with a podiatrist
- check your feet daily for cuts, blisters, bruises or signs of injury, which you 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) yourself.

For more information read [Diabetes – foot care](#).

Podiatrists and foot health for 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.

Podiatrists treat foot injuries from 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 or pain underneath the heel (plantar fasciitis)
- inflammation of the tendon at the back of the ankle (**Achilles tendinopathy**)
- pain at the base of the big toe (sesamoiditis).

BHC has more information on **running and jogging – preventing injury**

Podiatrists and foot problems in children

Podiatrists can help if children have problems with their walking, feet or legs. Some common childhood foot and leg problems that podiatrists can provide advice or treatment include:

- foot or leg pain
- walking on tip toes
- problems keeping up with other children of the same age when walking and running
- skin and nail problems like warts, tinea or ingrown toe nails
- feet affected by genetic conditions (such as Down syndrome).

For more information on children's feet, read **Children's feet and shoes**.

Podiatrists can help you 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.

For more information, visit **Choosing the right shoe**, and **Footwear for healthy feet**.

Podiatrists can prescribe inserts for shoes

Podiatrists sometimes prescribe **foot orthoses** (specially designed shoe inserts that help support the feet and correct any imbalances). There are a variety of foot orthoses that may be recommended, such as a universal type arch insert that provides some foot support, or an insert that is custom-made for your feet. These inserts help:

- reduce forces on your feet
- enable your feet to work in the most stable and efficient position for activity
- reduce pain in the feet and in joints like the knees and hips.

Where to get help

- **Australian Podiatry Association** Tel. **(03) 9416 3111**.

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

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