
Foot Conditions

Summary

Our feet and ankle joints have to bear the weight of our entire body with every step that we take, and when we are aiming for 10,000 steps per day, that is a lot of movement and stress. As a result, our feet are susceptible to many different injuries and conditions which are caused by anything from minor incidents such as stubbing your toe, to major trauma including car accidents.



Athlete's Foot

The medical term for athlete's foot is tinea pedis. It is a common skin infection of the foot that is caused by fungus. The fungus grows in areas that are warm and humid, therefore it usually starts in the skin between the toes. It commonly occurs in people whose feet have become very sweaty while confined within tightfitting shoes. Symptoms can include itchy feet and toes; scaly, cracked or peeling skin; stinging and burning; and inflamed, sore and red skin.

Athlete's foot is contagious, and can be spread from person to person through walking barefoot on contaminated floors in places like shared showers, changing rooms, or swimming pools.



Antifungal treatments help to relieve symptoms and clear the infection. Keeping your feet thoroughly dry, and wearing shoes that are made out of breathable materials will also help in the treatment and prevention of Athlete's foot.

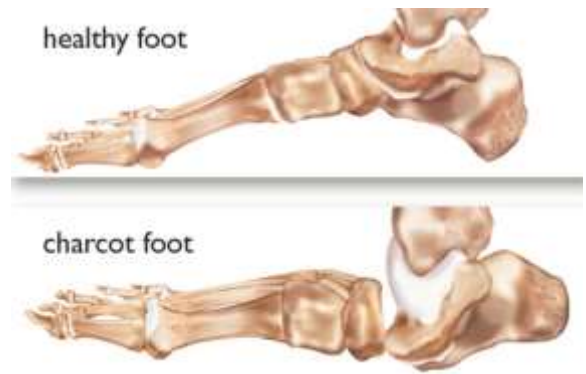
Charcot Foot

Peripheral neuropathy (nerve damage) leads to weakness and numbness in the feet. It decreases sensation and the ability for the individual to feel temperature changes, pain and trauma. A common cause of neuropathy is diabetes however, it can also result from injuries and infections.

As a result of the nerve damage, individuals are at risk of suffering foot injuries without knowing. A number of things, including a sprain or broken bone that does not get treatment quickly, an infection, or a sore on the foot that does not heal, can trigger Charcot foot.

As a result, the bones of the foot get weaker until they break, and with continued walking, the bones can move out of place and the foot eventually changes shape.

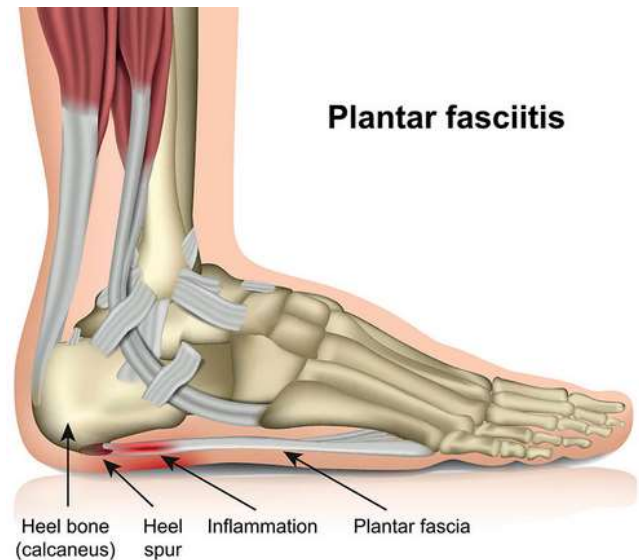
Treatment can include immobilisation, custom shoes and bracing, and activity modification. In some cases, the deformity may become severe enough that surgery is necessary.



Plantar Fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis is inflammation of the plantar fascia and is one of the most common causes of heel pain. It can be caused by being overweight and/or middle aged, having flat feet or high arches, playing certain sports that put a lot of stress on the heel bone, for example running and dancing, spending a lot of time on your feet, or wearing shoes with poor arch support or stiff soles.

Pain is usually felt on the underside of the heel. The pain is often worse in the morning after taking your first steps, and after prolonged standing or sitting.



Plantar fasciitis usually spontaneously improves within a year and treatment is generally aimed at controlling symptoms by way of medication, orthotics, physiotherapy, and night splints, et cetera.

Heel Spur

A heel spur forms over many months, when calcium builds up on the underside of the heel bone and grows into your foot arch. This can happen due to strain on the muscles and ligaments, or stretching of the plantar fascia.

Heel spurs are often painless, however they can also be associated with intermittent or chronic pain.

Most people with pain get better with conservative treatment, including stretching exercises, physiotherapy, taping, and medication. Occasionally, surgery may be required. This could involve removal of the spur or release of the plantar fascia.



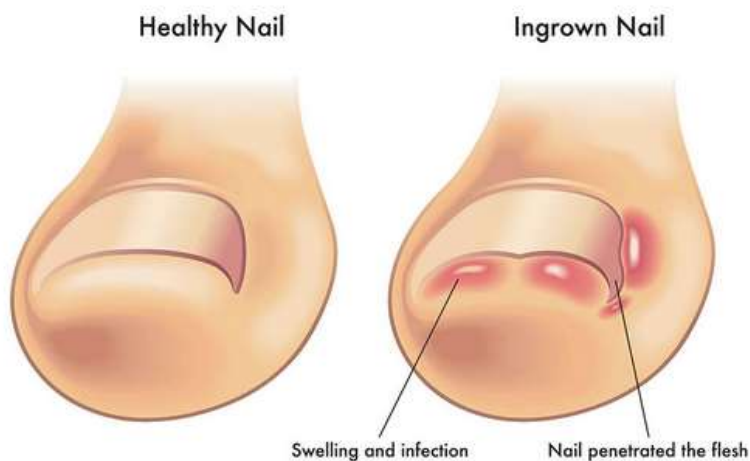
Ingrown Toenails

An ingrown toenail is a common condition that usually affects your big toe. It occurs when the corners or edges of your nails curl down and grow into the skin around your nail.

Ingrown toenails can result from many things including tight fitting shoes, not cutting your toenails properly, injuring your toe, for example stubbing it, and from having sweaty feet making your skin soft and it easier for your toenails to dig in. Ingrown toenails can become painful and inflamed. Sometimes they can become infected.

Treatment can include lifting the nail, partially removing the nail, and removing the nail and tissue.

Preventative measures include keeping your toenails at a moderate length so that they are even with the tips of your toes, wearing shoes that fit properly, and trimming your toenails straight across.



Corns and Calluses

Corns usually form on the top of your feet, sometimes on your toes, while calluses appear on the bottom of your feet, usually under the heels or balls of your feet. They are thick, hardened layers of skin that develop when your skin tries to protect itself against friction and pressure. This might occur as a result of very tight shoes rubbing your feet; or when there has been too much pressure against your foot for too long, for example when you have been standing for a long period of time.

Symptoms include a thick, rough area of skin; a hardened, raised bump, tenderness or pain under the skin; and flaky, dry or waxy skin.

For healthy people, treatment is often not needed, and simply eliminating the cause of the friction or pressure will make the corns and calluses disappear.



Blisters

Everyone has probably experienced a blister at some point in their lives.

A blister is a small pocket of fluid under the top layer of skin. It forms when friction repeatedly stretches the skin, creating a tear between skin layers which fills with fluid. A hard knock that damages the blood vessels can cause a blood blister, which is simply a blister filled with blood.



Foot blisters are usually the result of wearing shoes that rub your feet. Blisters can also be caused by burns, bites, frostbite, pressure ulcers et cetera.

Common friction blisters on your feet rarely require medical attention and minor blisters that are still intact will dry up in a week or two.

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