

HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter
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Foot Health

Overview

Your feet are more important than you think. They contain several bones. They can take quite the beating by supporting your body weight and from being active. By the time an American reaches the age of 50, they have logged about 75,000 miles on their feet. Regular foot care makes sure that feet can complete the task. Most foot problems can be prevented or lessened with proper detection, intervention or care. A foot can tell a lot about your general health status. Examining a foot can give a diagnosis of diabetes or nutritional deficiencies. Eating a well-rounded diet helps to keep your feet healthy. Omega-3 fats help to reduce inflammation and minimize pain in the feet. Making sure you consume a proper diet can help defend against health conditions known to cause foot and ankle problems. Aging can cause changes in your foot health such as collapsed arches, loss of cushioning, arthritis, and increased cracking of the skin. This does not mean that pain has to be part of the equation. With the right care, from moisturizing to using supportive footwear, symptoms of aging can be controlled.

Important Components of Foot Health

1. Hygiene – Wash your feet daily with soap and water.
2. Dry – Keep your feet dry. Fungus likes to grow in dark, warm and moist places.
3. Toenails – Trim your toenails straight across or with a slight curve.
4. Watch Your Weight – Obese people are 41% more likely to have a current foot issue and 16% more likely to have pain. Walking puts up to three times your body weight on your feet with every step.
5. Knowledge – Know the type of arch your foot has so you can buy proper fitting shoes. Pay attention to the aches and pains your foot produces and seek help if the pain is abnormal.

The Right Shoe

Choosing a shoe should be activity specific. Whether you require basketball, walking, or tennis shoes, all activities require a different level of movement and stability in the foot so the shoe needs to fit the requirements. Basketball shoes need extra ankle support

because of lateral movement and quick changes of directions that puts strain on the ankle. Visit a store that specializes in the type of shoe you are looking for whether it is athletic, dress or boots. The associates will be able to help you get fitted correctly using information about your foot, the way you walk and the activity. It's important to not get hung up on size because sizes can vary from brand to brand. Shoes should be comfortable from the first time you try them on in the store. They should support your entire foot. Shoes that don't have backs cause you to change the way you walk. This can lead to discomfort and foot injuries. It's acceptable to wear them sometimes, but you should not wear them all the time. Find shoes that are stiff in the middle and bend at the ball of the foot. High heels are acceptable for special occasions, but consider wearing platforms or wedge heels instead of stilettos. Check shoes often for signs of wear. Check the tread and midsole. If the shoe shows signs of uneven wear, it's time for a new pair. Running shoes should be replaced every 300-400 miles.

Tips for Buying the Right Shoe Include:

1. Always measure your foot before buying shoes. The best time to measure is at the end of the day when your foot is the largest.
2. Commonly, one foot is bigger than the other, so try the shoe on the larger foot.
3. Don't select shoes by the marked size, but by the way it fits your foot.
4. Make sure there is enough space in the shoe. There should be 3/8 to 1/2 an inch for the longest toe at the end of the shoe when standing.
5. The ball of the foot should fit comfortably on the widest part of the shoe.
6. Don't buy shoes that are too tight and expect them to stretch.
7. The heel should not slip up and down on the shoe when walking.

Common Foot Problems

Ankle Sprains – This is commonly a sports injury but can also happen while walking on uneven or slippery surfaces or while wearing unstable shoes like high heels. The ligaments in the foot are painfully stretched or torn. It is important to get proper treatment and rehabilitation. If an old sprain is not completely rehabilitated, it could lead to chronic ankle instability.

Toe & Metatarsal Fractures – It is important to see a doctor to have these diagnosed. Treatment can be determined by the physician and physical therapist.

Achilles Tendon Disorders – Tendonitis and tendonosis of the Achilles tendon are caused by a sudden increase in repetitive activity.

Hallux Rigidus – The big toe joint becomes painful and stiff usually due to overuse. Golfing is a common activity leading to this problem.

Ingrown Toenails – This condition can be caused by tight shoes or socks or incorrectly trimming the nail, but there is also a genetic component. The tendency for nails to curve inward is inherited. Don't try to dig the nail out. See a physician.

Plantar Warts – Warts can develop anywhere on the foot. They most commonly appear on the bottom of the foot. The warts can grow deep in the skin and can make walking or standing painful.

Plantar Fasciitis – The most common cause is an abnormal foot posture. It is more common in women due to wearing non-supportive shoes like flip-flops and ballet flats.

Morton's Neuroma – Compression of the nerve causes a thickening of nerve tissue in the ball of the foot. The compression or irritation can be caused by wearing shoes that have a tapered toe box or high heels that force the toe into the box.

Osteoarthritis – This is the most common type of arthritis. The symptoms include difficult and painful movement. It is caused by excessive strain and the wearing away of cartilage in the joints of the foot. Stiffness is worse after periods of rest.

Gout – Gout is another form of arthritis. It is caused by excess uric acid crystals collecting in and around the joint of the big toe. There is usually severe pain in the big toe.

Athlete Foot – This is a fungal infection that causes red, dry, flaking skin and sometimes pain or itching. The foot in acute stages has blisters that itch or weep. This can spread to the toes. It is often contracted in showers, gyms, dressing rooms or swimming pool lockers. Treatment includes prevention using proper hygiene. See a doctor to get a proper diagnosis and antifungal medications.

References

- www.medicinenet.com
- <http://foot.com/>
- www.foothealthfacts.org
- <http://www.apma.org>

Other News:

**If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at hanrahan@astate.edu.

The Arkansas State University Employee Wellness Newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Health questions can be addressed to Dean Susan Hanrahan, Ph.D., ext. 3112 or hanrahan@astate.edu. Produced by Michelle Williams, graduate student in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, Physical Therapy Program.