

Foot care

Washing

Wash your feet every day in warm, soapy water – avoid soaking them. Dry them carefully, particularly between your toes to help prevent fungal infections such as athlete's foot.



Skin care

Use a pumice or foot file once a week to gently remove hard skin and calluses. Apply a moisturiser to all areas of dry skin, avoiding between your toes. Never use sharp instruments, corn plasters or corn cures on your feet as they can damage your skin.



Nail care

Be careful when cutting your toenails. Cut and file toenails straight across without cutting down the sides. If you have a thick nail, file it regularly with an emery board.



Footwear

Ensure your shoes fit well in length, width and depth. Footwear with Velcro or lace fastenings are more supportive than slip-on footwear. Trainers are a good option as they are shock absorbent and provide stability and support. It is a good idea to buy shoes in the afternoon when your feet are at their largest as they will provide a better fit. If you are unsure of your shoe size, have your feet measured.

Change your socks, stockings and tights daily. Try to avoid socks with thick seams that might rub the toes, or socks with tight elasticated tops which affect circulation.

Originator: Podiatry Service

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Common foot problems

1. **Corns and calluses** are areas of hard, thickened skin, caused by rubbing, friction or pressure on the skin. Badly fitting footwear or a problem with foot movement or foot structure can lead to corn and callus formation.

You can self-treat by wearing footwear with enough space for irregularities eg bunions. Use a foot file or pumice regularly to reduce areas of callus build-up and apply moisturiser to help soften thickened skin.

People with diabetes, poor circulation or a reduced immune system should not self-treat, but instead seek advice from a podiatrist.



2. **Ingrown toenails** are a painful, red and inflamed area of skin. This commonly affects the big toe and is caused by the nail piercing the surrounding skin. This can be caused by poor nail cutting, poorly fitting footwear, trauma to that area or chronic wet skin. Avoid ingrown toenails by trimming nails regularly and keeping the corners of the nails visible. Trimming after a bath or shower will be easier as the nail plates can be softer. Change your footwear regularly if possible, and change socks daily to promote foot hygiene and avoid wet skin. This reduces the skin surrounding the nail plate becoming soft, which makes it easier for a nail to pierce the skin.

3. **Athlete's foot** is a fungal infection which commonly affects the skin on the heel and between the toes. It is a contagious skin condition that anybody can get, but those who use communal changing areas are more prone. The affected areas can be itchy and red. Antifungal cream or spray can be applied to dry areas of the feet such as the heels. If athlete's foot is between the toes, wash your feet in cold water and dry carefully without rubbing the skin too hard, being sure to use a separate towel for your feet. A spirit-based preparation can be applied on unbroken skin to help dry out the areas between the affected toes.



Contacts/support

Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists:
www.scpod.org www.feetforlife.info

Health and Care Professions Council Register,
Chiropodists and Podiatrists: www.hcp-uk.org

If your health needs change, please contact your GP for information on NHS Podiatry referrals.

References:

SOCAP

Previous internal education leaflets

NHS Choices