CHAMPS

Center for Healthy Aging Ministries, Programs & Services

Take Care of Your Feet: God Only Gave You One Pair

The foot is one of God's marvelous wonders. It is an integral part of our bodies functioning. The foot is our base, it carries us, provides balance as we move and adjusts to our daily needs. An estimated 900 pounds per square inch is exerted on the bottom of an average sized adult's foot. God formed us, we need to protect and treasure this gift.

As we age or we **grow** gradually in circumference, the challenge of caring for our feet may slowly slip out of view. But out of sight is not out of mind and **if** ignored the gradual feelings of discomfort in our feet can turn into a serious matter for anyone, especially for persons who have any loss of sensation in the feet.

When you have an annual exam, take off your shoes and socks while waiting for your doctor. This will remind you to have your health care provider exam your feet too. With certain chronic conditions such as diabetes mellitus, a history of blood clots in lower extremities, multiple sclerosis, loss of sensation in the feet (peripheral neuropathy), poor circulation to the extremities (peripheral vascular disease), a more frequent exam by your physician or podiatrist is appropriate.

Inspect the feet daily for any signs of skin breakdown (cracking, blisters), or loss of sensation. Report thin, fragile, shiny and hairless skin—all signs of decreased vascular supply. Toe nails also need to be examined for fungal disorders, however not every thickened, discolored nail is a fungal infection. Lay a mirror on the floor to look at the soles of the feet too. Persons with visual impairments may need to ask someone to inspect their feet for them. Cracks, sores or breaks in the skin are not normal. The presence of redness, warmth, dryness or calluses may signal an impending breakdown. Do not attempt to self-treat or to trim calluses or corns yourself! Schedule an appointment with your health care provider whenever these conditions are present.

Wash your feet daily with warm not hot water and be careful to rinse any remaining soap from them and to thoroughly dry the surface of each foot and between the toes. Persons with decreased sensations to the lower extremities should use a thermometer to test the water temperature before immersing their feet. Apply lotion to the surface of the feet to keep the skin soft and smooth while being careful not to use lotion between the toes.

Persons with foot problems and chronic conditions should always wear socks and not go barefoot to prevent inadvertent injuries to their already compromised feet.

Always cut toenails straight across and file the edge surface with an emery board or nail file. Ingrown toenails also require treatment by a health care provider, do not attempt to self treat.

Diabetics or persons with chronic conditions **may have Medicare benefits for nail and foot care**. However, **certain rules apply** therefore **always check with your physician, podiatrist or health care**

provider for more details on covered benefits.

Selecting the properly fitting shoes is important! Wear the type of socks or hose you normally wear when trying on new shoes. Make sure there is enough room in the toe area and across the ball of the foot. The width of a shoe is just as important as the length. Be sure the widest part of your foot is in the widest part of the shoe selected. Stand and check for 3/8-inch to ½-inch of space between the end of your longest toe and the end of the shoe. Walk around in them. Make sure the heel doesn't slip up and down either. Do not buy a shoe that is a "little tight" right now or that you think you will need to "break in"—they do not fit properly! Also, do not buy the same size you had the last time—brands change, styles are not all the same and your foot size can change as well.

Replace shoes with torn linings, wrinkles, or holes; inspect shoe soles and heels for wear and as appropriate have them replaced. Have more than one pair of shoes so you can alternate days of wear and allow time for the inner surfaces to dry thoroughly between wearing. If you have foot problems or chronic disorders affecting the feet and lower extremities, shoes that lace up or have a Velcro closing that can be adjusted to accommodate any swelling is a better choice than slip-on styles.

If you have balance problems choosing this design and a shoe with a broad heel can provide a more stable surface for walking. Shoes made of a soft material with a shock absorbing sole may be sufficient for some foot conditions; however it may be necessary to have your shoes fitted by a board certified pedorthist at a specialty foot store if you have more advanced foot conditions.

Finally, there are also a number of structural deformities and problems such as pronation of the foot (rolls inward when walking or running) that may create stresses on the foot and lower leg that left uncorrected can create stress on the knees and hip as well. Check your shoes for wear toward the inside of the shoe. This condition, sometimes called 'flat feet' requires proper arch supports and cushioning in stable shoes to correct the symptoms. Uncorrected, this can lead to heel spurs, pain in the knee, shin splints and tendonitis. Simple measures prescribed by your physician or podiatrist can alleviate this.

"But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body". (1 Corinthians: 12:14-20)

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CHAMPS is funded by a grant from the Alegent Health Community Benefit Trust