

Foot Notes

SPRING 2015

HEALTHY FEET FOR AN ACTIVE LIFE

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Don't Let Pain Slow Your Spring Walks
- Job Tough on Your Feet?
- Don't Ignore Ankle Sprains

Don't Let Foot Pain Slow Your Springtime Walk

While spring is a perfect time to begin a walking program, for some, foot pain can make walking difficult, if not impossible. Arthritis, bunions and heel spurs are common causes of foot pain, but the good news is that most of these conditions can be improved with proper treatment.

Before you begin your spring walking regimen, check these important items off your list:

- ▶ Wear supportive shoes.
- ▶ Wear moisture-wicking socks.
- ▶ Stretch muscles before and after you walk.
- ▶ Don't overdo it. Gradually work into a walking program.

If you experience pain in your feet or ankles that doesn't disappear within two weeks, schedule an examination with our office.



Is Your Job Tough on Your Feet?

Many occupations are hard on the feet, and visits to our office for work-related foot problems are on the rise.

People who spend eight hours a day or more walking or standing at their job often suffer from chronic foot disorders, such as heel pain (plantar fasciitis), hammertoes, bunions and blisters, which occur from repetitive stress and may be aggravated by wearing inappropriate footwear. This repetitive stress can also lead to painful hairline breaks in the bones of the foot called stress fractures.

Workplace safety regulations often require employees to wear steel-toed boots or shoes. While this protective footwear prevents injuries from industrial accidents, the rigid toe box that guards against traumatic incidents is also responsible for the chronic foot problems many industrial employees experience, such as toe irritation, heel pain and Achilles tendon stress. To relieve toe discomfort, some workers opt for shoes with more room in the toes but are too big. Over time, the ill-fitting shoes put too much pressure on the heels and lead to plantar fasciitis and Achilles problems. In some cases, surgery is recommended for treatment of plantar fasciitis and other conditions when conservative treatment doesn't provide long-lasting relief.

Most industrial workers would benefit from protective shoe attachments that can be strapped onto the toe box of a flexible work shoe. These attachments provide the necessary protection and are much better for feet than steel-toed shoes.

Orthotics can also provide excellent support and relief from repetitive stress. They correct biomechanical irregularities, realign joints and cushion daily pressure on the feet. Orthotics also help prevent complications, such as pain in the lower back, knees and hips, which result from bad posture related to foot discomfort.

If you work on your feet all day, we advise you to evaluate your footwear choices to be sure they are comfortable and appropriate for your occupation. If practical, cushioned athletic shoes are highly recommended. For employees who must wear formal business attire, we advise wearing dress shoes that are wide enough and also recommend using arch supports or orthotics.



If you are experiencing foot pain you feel is associated with your work environment, make an appointment with our office—we'll be happy to help evaluate the best course of action for pain relief.

Don't Ignore Ankle Sprains



One of the most frequent injuries seen by foot and ankle surgeons is an improperly self-treated ankle sprain.

Ankle sprains commonly result from twisting the foot while walking or running on uneven surfaces or during physical activity. When the ankle is sprained, the ligaments, which hold the ankle bones and joint together, are stretched, partially torn or ruptured, depending on the injury's severity. Most ankle sprains are lateral—outside of the ankle joint—and symptoms can range from tenderness, swelling and discoloration to being unable to walk because the ankle joint is too unstable.

If you experience an ankle sprain, immediately provide the RICE treatment (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation) to reduce swelling and pain. In more severe cases, a trip to the Emergency Department or our

office for immediate treatment may be necessary.

For most ankle sprains, we recommend keeping weight off the ankle and using an elastic bandage, brace, splint or short cast to eliminate motion within the joint. It can take three to eight weeks for an ankle sprain to heal and longer in severe cases. We also recommend a follow-up appointment with a foot and ankle surgeon to ensure the ankle is healing properly.

Repeated ankle sprains or severe injuries may eventually need surgery to tighten the ligaments around the ankle to improve stability. Ankle strengthening exercises, ankle supports and taping of the joint are also recommended to help prevent repeat sprains.



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