

Athletes Foot

This is a fungal infection which can lead to intense itching and a cracked blistered, peeling area of skin. It is commonly found in between toes. The warm, dark sweaty environment in footwear is an ideal breeding ground. Fungal infections are contagious and can spread anywhere on your skin/nails.

Solution

Dry feet properly after a bath or shower, especially in between your toes. Good foot hygiene is essential as well as exposing your feet to the fresh air. Change your footwear. It takes 24 to 48 hours for shoes to dry out properly. There are a number of antifungal medicines available without prescription.

BONES

Bunion

With this condition the big toe curves towards the second toe and the joint becomes swollen and tender, making walking difficult. This condition can also cause a callous to develop.

Solution

Due to the shape of the foot, correct fitting footwear is essential. The big toe joint should be accommodated within the width and depth of the shoe. A lace, buckle or velcro strap would also be recommended. Depending on severity of this condition surgery may be an option, you should discuss this with your doctor.

Hallux Rigidus

Instead of the big toe bending normally, the toe stiffens and forms a bump at the top of the joint, making the "push off" motion in walking difficult.

Solution

Footwear - wearing shoes with a lace, buckle or velcro strap is essential to easing the problem.

Hammer Toes

This commonly affects the second toe which becomes bent up and can't straighten during walking. Corns can develop where it rubs against the shoe.

Solution

Ensure socks/tights are not too tight across the toes. Footwear should resemble the shape of the foot with a round toe box and be deep enough to remove pressure from the toe. Lace, buckle or velcro strap shoes are essential.

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Foot care advice - Common Foot Problems

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TOENAILS

Ingrown Toenails

In ingrown toenail pierces the skin of the toe. It commonly affects the big toe but can affect other toes. The piece of nail may cut into the skin causing redness, swelling, pain and pus (*infection*).

Solution

Initially keep the area clean by using a lukewarm salt footbath, apply an antiseptic and dry dressing. Seek advice from a podiatrist who will treat the problem and offer advice for a more permanent solution.

How to Avoid?

Avoid cutting down the side of your nails or cutting nails too short. Make sure socks, tights and shoes fit properly and are not too tight.

Involuted Nails (*curved nails*)

Toenails are not flat they are curved, but sometimes a nail can curve too much and the toe feels pinched, this is called an involuted nail.

Solution

Avoid cutting down the side of the nail. Instead file toenails twice a week. Also use a firm nailbrush to clear nail edges. This should ease discomfort if carried out regularly.

Fungal Nails

This is a painless condition which can cause the nail to change colour, thicken and crumble making the nail unsightly.

Solution

There are a number of over the counter preparations available, but depending on the severity of the condition a visit to your doctor may be necessary.

Thickened Nails

This can be caused by damage or pressure to the nailbed. This condition is permanent but can be successfully maintained.

Solution

File your toenails twice a week when they are dry, rubbing the nail file across the top of the thickened nail. Ensure your footwear is deep enough at the toe box, preventing excess pressure on to the nail.

SKIN

Callous/Corn

When we walk or stand our body weight is carried onto the ball of our foot where skin becomes thicker to withstand the pressure. When the pressure becomes intense, growths in the form of a callous/corn may appear for different reasons.

Hard corn - caused by pressure.

Seed corn - These are small usually painless, associated with dry skin.

Solution

Do not cut corns yourself. The use of a pumice stone on a regular basis with the application of a moisturising cream daily would be advised for callous, seed corns and hard corns.

Soft corns - it essential that you thoroughly dry in between your toes. Ensure footwear accommodates the shape and width of your foot as well as providing a shock absorbing sole. No handcream should be applied between the toes.

Verruca

The Human Papilloma virus causes a verruca. This virus is contagious but can only be caught by direct contact. In the early stages a verruca looks like a small, dark puncture mark but later turns grey or brown becoming rough and bumpy with a cauliflower appearance with black spots in the middle. A verruca tends to be painful to pinch.

Solution

Keep the area covered to prevent spreading the virus to other family members. Do not share a towel. Ask your pharmacist about verruca preparations.