

## Fact Sheet

# Seniors Foot Pain

Years of wear and tear can be hard on our feet. So can particular diseases, poor circulation, improperly trimmed toenails, and wearing shoes that don't fit properly. Problems with our feet can be the first sign of more serious medical conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, and nerve and circulatory disorders. Practising good foot care is essential to help keeping you on your feet.



Wearing comfortable shoes that fit well can prevent many foot ailments. Here are some tips for getting a proper shoe fit:

- The size of your feet changes as you grow older so always have your feet measured before buying shoes. The best time to measure your feet is at the end of the day when your feet are largest.
- Most of us have one foot that is larger than the other, so fit your shoe to your larger foot.
- Don't select shoes by the size marked inside the shoe but by how the shoe fits your foot.
- Select a shoe that is shaped like your foot.
- During the fitting process, make sure there is enough space (3/8" to 1/2") for your longest toe at the end of each shoe when you are standing up.
- Make sure the ball of your foot fits comfortably into the widest part of the shoe.
- Don't buy shoes that feel too tight and expect them to stretch to fit.
- Your heel should fit comfortably in the shoe with a minimum amount of slipping - the shoes should not ride up and down on your heel when you walk.
- Walk in the shoes to make sure they fit and feel right. Then take them home and spend some time walking on carpet to make sure the fit is a good one.

The upper part of the shoes should be made of a soft, flexible material to match the shape of your foot. Shoes made of leather can reduce the possibility of skin irritations. Soles should provide solid footing and not be slippery. Thick soles cushion your feet when walking on hard surfaces. Low-heeled shoes are more comfortable, safer, and less damaging than high-heeled shoes.



**Hihett**  
**Podiatry**

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### Common foot problems in Seniors include:

**Osteoarthritis** is also known as wear and tear arthritis, and it can affect joints within the feet. Arthritis literally means inflammation of one or more joints and is painful. Pain relief is key to assisting in arthritis, keeping the joints stable via orthotics, and good footwear and if required pharmacological pain relief.

**Fungal and Bacterial Conditions**, including athlete's foot, occur because our feet spend a lot of time in shoes - a warm, dark, humid place - perfect for fungus to grow. Fungal and bacterial conditions can cause dry skin, redness, blisters, itching, and peeling. If not treated right away, an infection may be hard to cure.

**Dry skin** can cause itching and burning feet. Use mild soap in small amounts and a moisturizing cream or lotion on your legs and feet every day. Be careful about adding oils to bath water since they can make your feet and bathtub very slippery.

**Corns and calluses** are caused by friction and pressure when the bony parts of your feet rub against your shoes. Sometimes wearing shoes that fit better or using special pads solves the problem. Treating corns and calluses yourself may be harmful, especially if you have diabetes or poor circulation. Over-the-counter medicines contain acids that destroy the tissue but do not treat the cause and should be avoided.

**Bunions** develop when the joints in your big toe no longer fit together as they should and become swollen and tender. Bunions tend to run in families. If a bunion is not severe, wearing shoes cut wide at the instep and toes, taping the foot, or wearing pads that cushion the bunion may help the pain. Other treatments include physical therapy, wearing orthotic devices, shoe inserts or anti-inflammatory drugs.

**Ingrown toenails** occur when a piece of the nail breaks the skin - which can happen if you don't cut your nails properly. Ingrown toenails are very common in the large toes. Seeing a podiatrist regularly can help maintain a good nail shape that will avoid ingrown (involuting) nails.

**Hammertoe** is caused by a shortening of the tendons that control toe movements. The toe knuckle is usually enlarged, drawing the toe back. Over time, the joint enlarges and stiffens as it rubs against shoes. Your balance may be affected. Wearing shoes and stockings with plenty of toe room is a treatment for hammertoe.

**Heel Spurs/ Plantar Fasciitis** is caused by muscle strain in the feet. Standing for long periods of time, wearing badly fitting shoes, or being overweight can make spurs worse. Sometimes spurs are completely painless - at other times they can be very painful. Treatments for spurs include using foot supports, heel pads, and heel cups, stretching and physical therapy.

#### ALWAYS CONSULT A TRAINED PROFESSIONAL

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