

Integrated Regional Falls Program



North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN

Foot Care & Foot Wear

Facts about Feet!

Healthy feet allow us to stay active, and lead independent lives. Feet that are healthy and pain free can help us maintain good balance and prevent falls.

However, three out of four people develop serious foot problems as they age. Our feet can alert us to health concerns such as; diabetes, arthritis, nerve damage and poor circulation. Practicing good foot care is a cornerstone of preventive foot health.

Care of the Feet

- Wash your feet daily using warm water and do not soak them longer than 10 minutes to avoid cracking; dry well between your toes.
- Check your feet daily for cuts, bruises, calluses and swelling. Use a mirror or ask for help.
- Keep the skin on your feet soft and smooth and be sure to wipe off excess cream and do not apply cream between your toes.
- Keep your toenails trimmed; and don't cut them too short!
- Wear socks, avoiding socks with ridges or elastic at the top as they can restrict circulation.
- Avoid walking in stocking feet; consider wearing supportive shoes in your home.
- Wear **"falls smart"** shoes. Be sure they fit properly, give proper support and grip the ground.
- Be active every day. Walking is the best way to keep you, and your feet, healthy!



Warning signs

See your doctor or a foot specialist right away if you notice:

- a sore on your foot that doesn't heal or gets infected
- pain when you walk that stops when you rest
- unusual coldness, cramps, numbness, tingling or discomfort in your feet
- that you are less sensitive to foot pain, hot or cold
- the skin on your feet or legs changes colour
- a change in the shape/structure of your foot

"Falls Smart" Shoes for Health and Safety

Shoe Size: measure both of your feet every time you buy shoes. Choose shoes that are ½ inch longer than your longest toe. Buy shoes late in the day as feet tend to swell.

Design: The inside of the shoe should be soft with no inside seam areas that can cause blisters or sores to form.

Material: Leather and canvas shoes are the best choices for letting your feet "breathe." They also bend with your foot, so won't rub and make blisters.



Design: Get shoes with closed toes and backs; they protect your feet from injury and provide support. The toe area (toe box) should be deep and wide enough to allow your toes to move. The heel should be as wide as your foot, and no higher than 1 inch, to provide more contact with the floor, keep your ankles from twisting and your back from aching. Running or walking shoes tend to be more comfortable and can make you more sure-footed. Laces and Velcro closures provide a snug fit or room for swelling.

Sole: Soles should provide good grip that does not catch on carpet.

Diabetes and Foot Care

Diabetes can damage your nerves. As a result, you might not feel hot, cold or pain in your feet. Diabetes can also cause poor blood flow in your legs. Without good blood flow, little cuts and sores take longer to heal and can become deeper and bigger sores called ulcers. If ulcers become infected, or foot tissue starts to die because of poor or no blood flow (gangrene), you may have to go to the hospital. In the worst cases, doctors may have to remove (amputate) toes, a foot or a leg. Because diabetes may keep you from feeling foot problems, it is very important to adopt good foot care practices.

Arthritis and Foot Care:

Arthritis is a disease that affects joints and people with arthritis often suffer from sore and swollen feet. Your doctor can treat many of the foot problems that are caused by arthritis as well as suggest medicine to relieve the pain. Your choice of shoe can do a lot to keep your feet as comfortable as possible. For example, your shoes should have:

- high, wide space at the toe
- rocker soles designed to reduce stress and pain at the ball of the foot
- laces that can be loosened if/when your feet swell

Stay on your feet!

Wearing shoes is your best protection from falls. Research shows that going shoeless indoors and out can increase your risk for falls up to 10%. Each year about one-third of seniors are hurt in falls. Their injuries include sprains and strains, broken bones or head trauma. In Canada, more than 5,000 seniors die from falls each year.



References

National Institute of Health (2010). *National Institute on Aging; Age Page Foot Care*. Retrieved from <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/foot-care>

Public Health Agency of Canada (2005). *Foot Care Info Sheet*. Retrieved from www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines