

Foot Care Essentials

Why Preventive Foot Health is Important

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Most people take their feet for granted, until pain or problems such as blisters or calluses develop. But it's important to be kind to your feet and take care of them—before problems arise—and to treat existing problems before they limit your ability to function.

Here are three important reasons for you to take care of your feet and practice [good foot hygiene](https://www.ipfh.org/foot-care-essentials/how-to-practice-good-foot-hygiene). (<https://www.ipfh.org/foot-care-essentials/how-to-practice-good-foot-hygiene>)

Quality of life

Quality of life/ability to function. Your quality of life is directly related to your ability to be self-sufficient—capable of performing activities of daily living such as walking, shopping, visiting friends and family, working and playing. If your feet hurt or you have other foot problems, you are unlikely to function at your best. If you modify your [gait](https://www.ipfh.org/resources/glossary-of-foot-terms/gait-1) (<https://www.ipfh.org/resources/glossary-of-foot-terms/gait-1>) to avoid a painful [bunion](https://www.ipfh.org/foot-conditions/foot-conditions-a-z/bunions) (<https://www.ipfh.org/foot-conditions/foot-conditions-a-z/bunions>), for example, your posture and balance will be affected, making you more vulnerable to falling.

Productive work

It goes without saying that good foot health is important if your job demands that you be on your feet for any significant amount of time. Even if you spend most of your time at your desk, you still have to get up occasionally; in fact, to avoid neck and shoulder pain associated with sitting at a computer, and to prevent blood from pooling in your feet, it is vital that you do stand up and walk around at least once an hour. Poor foot health can harm work performance, resulting in lost time, lost productivity, and lower job efficiency and effectiveness.

Regular physical activity

A large body of research confirms the importance of physical activity to overall health, especially as we get older. The latest US government recommendations for all adults (including those 65 and older) who

generally are fit and have no limiting health conditions is, at the least, 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (e.g., brisk walking) every week and resistance training on two or more days a week. For many people, that's daunting enough without adding foot problems to the mix.

Of course, any amount of physical activity is better than none, but with poor foot health, you may be less likely to engage in even a minimal amount of physical activity. The less you do, the less you can do. The result: loss of muscle mass and strength; reduced endurance; and higher risk of diseases related to a sedentary lifestyle, including diabetes, heart disease, and cognitive decline.

Foot care and Hygiene

Taking care of your feet now can help prevent foot problems down the road. If you already have foot problems, good [foot hygiene](https://www.ipfh.org/foot-care-essentials/how-to-practice-good-foot-hygiene) (<https://www.ipfh.org/foot-care-essentials/how-to-practice-good-foot-hygiene>) will help keep those problems in check, and may help some of them disappear altogether.

- [Inspect feet](https://www.ipfh.org/foot-care-essentials/how-to-practice-good-foot-hygiene) (<https://www.ipfh.org/foot-care-essentials/how-to-practice-good-foot-hygiene>) daily. Look for cuts, bruises, blisters, red spots. Feel for lumps or bumps.
- Wash feet daily. Rinse off soap completely and dry your feet thoroughly, especially between the toes.
- Trim toenails straight across and not too short. Don't cut or dig at corners.
- Do not trim, shave or use over-the-counter medications to dissolve corns or calluses; see a foot specialist instead.
- Wear clean socks and change them every day; more frequently if you sweat profusely to help avoid athlete's foot (IPFH suggests wearing [padded socks](https://www.ipfh.org/resources/glossary-of-foot-terms/padded-sock) (<https://www.ipfh.org/resources/glossary-of-foot-terms/padded-sock>) made of man-made fibers and fiber blends for their moisture-wicking properties).
- To help ensure that your feet are optimally protected, IPFH suggests you wear only properly selected and fitted, as part of an [integrated approach](https://www.ipfh.org/resources/glossary-of-foot-terms/integrated-approach) (<https://www.ipfh.org/resources/glossary-of-foot-terms/integrated-approach>), [padded socks](https://www.ipfh.org/resources/glossary-of-foot-terms/padded-sock) (<https://www.ipfh.org/resources/glossary-of-foot-terms/padded-sock>) with shoes with non-slip outsoles and any inserts or orthotics prescribed or recommended by a doctor or [foot health professional](https://www.ipfh.org/resources/foot-health-professionals) (<https://www.ipfh.org/resources/foot-health-professionals>).

If you have a chronic condition such as [diabetes](https://www.ipfh.org/foot-conditions/diabetes:-foot-concerns) (<https://www.ipfh.org/foot-conditions/diabetes:-foot-concerns>) or [arthritis](https://www.ipfh.org/foot-conditions/arthritis-foot-concerns) (<https://www.ipfh.org/foot-conditions/arthritis-foot-concerns>), you may have to take additional steps. Read the articles on our site and check with your doctor to be sure you are doing everything possible to keep your feet as healthy as possible.

Reviewed by [Robert P. Thompson, C.Ped](https://www.ipfh.org/about-us/scientific-advisory-board/bob-thompson) (<https://www.ipfh.org/about-us/scientific-advisory-board/bob-thompson>), IPFH Scientific Advisory Board

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