

Foot Notes



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SOLEDOC THOUGHTS

“We’re all in this together.”

Recent events this fall, leading to the near collapse of Wall Street, have left many of us pondering our futures. Last year, all was gold and glitter, but there was a rather innocuous black dot that kept growing on the horizon. As it turns out, as those of us who have turned a few gray hairs know, you can’t buy a house worth \$400,000, pay no interest for five years, have lousy credit and insufficient income, and believe you can pay for a house, two cars, and a boat.

While our financial system remains a mystery to most of us, basic leadership does not. Hardworking, honest leaders exist in our lives every day, but we pay them little attention. We always expect they will be doing what they do best: representing our communities and best interests, and we all benefit. Or so we like to believe. Our U.S. community bears much more watching and challenging than we as a people participate. It is time to stand up and question what is right for you, your community, and your country.

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Back to the black dot. If that little black dot were on your foot, you would have it examined, and soon. It could be a melanoma. It could change your life and even end it prematurely. Acting early and seeking a correct solution is dire to your health, whether it is diabetes, obesity, or skin lesions. So it is with our future and our children’s future. We need to question and not be complacent any longer.

Your physical health can’t afford complacency, and neither can your city, state, or country.

Let’s make it a better year, starting with our own well-being—mentally, physically, and financially. Invest time in yourself and then ask a great many questions.

Donald W. Orminski, D.P.M., F.A.C.F.A.S.

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Did a foot fungus follow you home?

Fungi love feet! There are a couple of reasons for this. First, fungi thrive on dead tissue, and because the outermost layers of our skin and nails aren't technically living, fungi are naturally attracted to them. Second, because feet tend to sweat easily and are generally covered by shoes and socks, they provide the perfect dark, damp environment for fungi to grow.

Nail fungus

Fungal infections of the nails are more common in older people, diabetics, and those whose immune systems are compromised. Athletes may be prone to them because they tend to damage their toenails playing sports.

Onychomycosis, the technical name for toenail fungus, often begins with a discolored toenail. The change may first be noticeable at the tip of the nail. As the fungus grows, the nail thickens. It may turn a yellowish-brown color, and the texture may become crumbly.

Fungal infections of the nail can be very stubborn. It's wise to seek treatment as soon as symptoms become apparent. One topical treatment has been shown to be effective, but it can take several months to work.

When treatment with medication isn't successful, nail removal may be the only option. This can be done in one of two ways. The first option is to simply remove the nail using local anesthesia, and then give it a chance to grow back normally without the fungus. In severe cases, when the fungus is causing pain and skin deformity, a similar procedure removes the nail and destroys the nail bed so that the nail cannot grow back.

Athlete's foot

This foot ailment doesn't restrict itself to athletes, but it does seem to prefer men to women. It is so common that nearly three-quarters of all Americans will suffer from an infection at least once in their lives. There is more than one type of athlete's

foot, and each manifests itself in a unique way. athlete's foot tends to run in families, and there is suspicion that some people are genetically predisposed to the fungus. Researchers have also noted that someone who has had athlete's foot is more likely to suffer with the fungus than someone who has never had it before.

There are three main types of athlete's foot. The rarest is called acute vesicular athlete's foot. Some of you may know this fungus by another name—jungle rot. It starts with painful blisters, sometimes on the top of the foot or on the sole. Secondary blisters in other areas of the body may follow.

Another type is called moccasin athlete's foot because it generally infects the sole. The outer skin may exhibit a silvery scaliness, while the second layer becomes tender and turns pinkish. People who suffer from asthma and eczema are more likely to contract this fungus.

The type of athlete's foot most of us are familiar with is called chronic interdigital athlete's foot. This type generally erupts between the smaller toes, causing cracking and scaling. Intense itching is associated with this problem.

Athlete's foot is not always easy to diagnose. Although a clinical exam may indicate a type of fungus, tests to confirm exactly what type are not always conclusive. Fortunately, topical medications are often effective if used properly and taken until the symptoms have completely disappeared. More serious cases generally require treatment with oral antifungal medications and careful monitoring of the patient.

CH, CH, CH CHANGES in your feet...and ankles

If you were 12 years old when David Bowie released the song "Changes" in 1972, you've already reached middle age, and you're probably starting to notice some changes in your body. Along with the rest of the changes you're experiencing with age, your feet and ankles are changing, too.

Feet and ankles are known for changing in several ways as we age. Chief among these are:

- The cushioning thins (especially on the bottoms of the feet and at the heels).
- The elasticity of the tendons, ligaments, and skin diminishes.
- Injuries and infections occur more often.
- The feet spread out. In many cases, shoe size changes.

Most Americans complain of sore feet and ankles as they age. However, the normal aging process should not include foot pain. Generally, foot pain is related to a particular problem. Foot problems can have a number of causes, including genetics, obesity, and poor shoe choices. Couple these with years of standing on hard surfaces or wearing high heels, and the situation intensifies. Common foot and ankle disorders among the aged include arthritic pain, heel spurs, nail deformities, and bunions.

No matter what your age, caring for your feet and ankles is important. With good daily and regular professional care, many foot and ankle conditions associated with aging can be avoided. Take steps now to prevent foot and ankle pain. Call us to learn how.



With good daily care and regular professional care, many foot and ankle problems can be avoided.



Healthy feet?

How healthy are your feet and ankles? It isn't always easy to tell. Check off any statements that apply to you to assess your foot and ankle health.

1. ___ I am 45 or older.
2. ___ I am 25 or more pounds overweight.
3. ___ For most of my life, I have been on my feet six to eight hours per day.
4. ___ I wear heels of three inches or more almost daily.
5. ___ A good workout is when I get off the couch to go to the refrigerator.
6. ___ I've had to give up some activities because of foot or ankle pain.
7. ___ I have diabetes or a family history of diabetes.
8. ___ It seems like I'm always twisting my ankle.
9. ___ I've had corns or calluses at least once in my life.
10. ___ I suffer with bunions or hammertoes.
11. ___ My legs cramp, and my feet are often cold.
12. ___ I have flat feet.
13. ___ I have very high arches.
14. ___ I often suffer from heel pain.
15. ___ I have arthritis in my feet and ankles.

If you didn't check a single one of these, congratulations! Chances are good that you have healthy feet. But if you should suffer a foot problem, don't hesitate to call our office. If you checked five or more, it's probably a good idea to see a professional podiatrist. Wear and tear on your feet can add up to some painful problems, but with treatment, many people find relief from their foot ailments.

JUST PLAIN WRONG



Although hereditary factors play a major role in the development of foot problems, the wrong shoes can contribute to ailments such as corns, calluses, and even bunions. Purchasing quality shoes that support the arches and leave plenty of wiggle room for toes can increase your chances of keeping your feet healthy. If you're already suffering from foot ailments that cause deformities, consult with a podiatrist before purchasing shoes.

Buying quality shoes doesn't necessarily mean emptying your wallet. Reasonably priced shoes can be good for your feet if they meet particular standards. Look for sturdy, supportive shoes that flex when you walk. The toe box should be large enough to allow your toes to wiggle, and there should be a small space between the front edge of your longest toe and the tip of your shoe. The counter should be rigid enough to hold your heel firmly in place, but padded so that it fits comfortably. Shoes that tie are a good choice because they fit snugly. Watch out for shoes that rub anywhere on the foot. Shoes should fit well when you try them on and not require "breaking in."

Visit the store late in the day, when your feet have swollen slightly from walking. Be sure to fit your shoes to the slightly larger of your two feet. Your feet should be measured when you're standing, and you should be sure to try on both shoes and walk in them. Don't worry too much about size, since shoes are made in a number of countries, and sizing is different. Choose a pair that fits your feet no matter what the size on the box says.

If you use orthotics, bring them along to be sure they fit.



Basketball

Don't score a foot injury

Basketball is hard on feet and ankles in two ways:

■ First, acute injuries often result when landing improperly after jumping.

■ Second, chronic injuries develop gradually when an athlete doesn't warm up before playing.

Acute injuries can happen quite accidentally. Sometimes a player twists in the air and lands awkwardly. These types of injuries can't always be avoided.

Chronic injuries are a different story, however. These are often the result of not stretching and warming up before practice or a game. Wearing the wrong shoes—especially those that don't provide proper ankle support—can be disastrous. The right shoes are designed and constructed specifically for the sport of basketball. In addition to good ankle support, plenty of cushioning to absorb the shock of landing on everything from wood to asphalt to concrete is essential.

Replace shoes regularly. If you're playing or practicing five days out of seven in the same shoes, don't expect them to last more than three months. Don't wait until the soles are worn smooth or the uppers have broken down. Remember that your shoes are protecting your feet on the court, and you need the support they provide.

Areas of the feet that are commonly injured while playing basketball include the Achilles tendon, plantar fascia, and sesamoid. These problems require professional diagnosis and treatment. Acute injuries, such as fractures and sprained ankles, need immediate attention. Seek first aid, and then secure a professional diagnosis.

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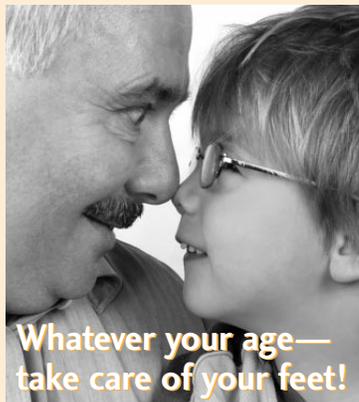
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**Whatever your age—
take care of your feet!**

PLANTAR WARTS—*no time for the pain!*

Plantar warts are different from warts you find elsewhere on the body because they are found only on the soles (plantar surface) of the feet. This is an important distinction because it's their location that makes them painful. The pressure of your body weight squeezing the wart between you and the floor causes plantar warts to be downright unpleasant.

Plantar warts are caused by a variation of human papillomavirus—the same virus known to cause certain cancers. In spite of this commonality, plantar warts aren't dangerous, but they can be bothersome. Papillomavirus is quite pervasive and is often found on the skin, but it's only when it permeates the surface that a wart grows.

Often, plantar warts are confused with corns or calluses—both of which can occur on the bottoms of the feet. Sometimes they erupt in clusters, and they often have black spots within their rounded borders. Having plantar warts diagnosed early, while they're still small, usually translates to more effective treatment.

Professional treatment for plantar warts may include cryotherapy, surgery, or laser treatment. Each of these has been shown to be effective, but the treatment that is chosen will correspond to your particular case. Don't let plantar warts slow you down when treatment is available. Call us to say "good-bye" to them for good!

Common warts, flat warts...and Hogwarts

While plantar warts tend to be flat, common warts usually stick out from the skin. Common warts range from flesh-colored to a grayish hue and are generally rough to the touch.

Flat warts are similar to plantar warts in their lack of dimension, but they are usually found on the face. They are as large as a fourth of an inch in diameter and often spread quickly.

Hogwarts is a mythical castle and the setting for parts of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. It bears no relationship to warts found anywhere on the human body, but the author has suggested that it may be related to the hogwort plant, which is an annual covered in light-brown, woolly hairs that prefers sandy soil.

The information included in this newsletter is not intended as a substitute for consultation with a podiatrist. Specific situations always require consultation with appropriate health-care professionals.