

Foot Notes

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SOLEDOC

Thoughts

ARE WE THERE YET?

This last spring, for those of you who received a newsletter, I spoke of the uncertainty of America's financial security, as well as our own.

The debate continues as to what is working and what is not working for a recovery. We Americans are not renowned for our patience, whether it is international, national, or school politics. We are doers when we need to be, if the task is clearly defined. We become irascible and illogical when the goalpost is continually moving. The moving goalposts that come to mind for me are health-care reform and a sound financial recovery. In order to make a field goal in these areas, we need to own up to the reality that taxes will have

to be increased for everyone at some level. The promise of health care/Medicare/Social Security reform without increasing taxes is a fairy tale.

We need change in many areas in this country. It will start with all of us being fiscally responsible at home and at work. We aren't nearly where we need to be for reform requiring major change. It will take years to transition to security for our youth, our poor, and our seniors. We will have to remind ourselves to be patient and not ask from the back seat, "Are we there yet?"

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Cell-phone sidebar

Whatever happened to civility in conversation, like looking the store clerk in the eye and thanking her, instead of laying plastic down while "chatting on the cell," avoiding eye contact, and scurrying out to the car. My mother taught me to look people in the eye, give them your full attention, and say "please" and "thank you."

This is the way we like to be treated and treat people in our office.

Thank you for all your referrals. We appreciate them!



Posture

Perfect

“Stand up straight!” “Don’t slouch!” Chances are good you’ve heard at least one of these phrases as a child. Having good posture is equally important in adulthood—an unbalanced posture can lead to foot and ankle problems down the road.

Poor posture can occur as you work on the computer, drive your car, or wait in line at the grocery store. Your shoulders start to slouch and you hunch over, which over time can create pain in the neck, back, and extremities. Fortunately, bad posture can usually be corrected with just a little extra effort.

Before you can practice good posture, you must know what it feels like. Practice spreading your weight across both feet when you stand. If you need help, imagine that a string attached to the top of your head is pulling your body toward the ceiling. Relax your shoulders and tuck in your pelvis so it aligns with your rib cage.

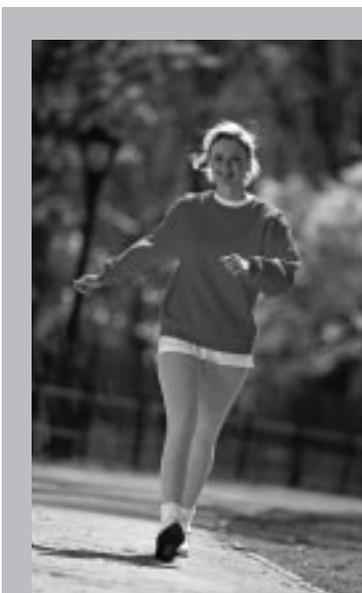
When sitting, try to keep your head, neck, shoulders, and hips in a single vertical line. Place your feet flat on the floor, and avoid imbalanced poses such as crossing your legs or leaning to one side. Whenever you feel tired or stiff, take a moment to stretch and move around. This will get your blood flowing and relieve built-up tension.

If you have a hard time maintaining good posture, work on strengthening your core muscles through regular exercise. Even something as simple as walking can tone your body and make it easier to stand up straight.

You can also use tools such as supportive footwear. Wearing high heels regularly can change the body’s alignment and make good posture difficult, so be sure to switch to more comfortable shoes whenever you get the chance. Pay similar attention to handbags, briefcases, and anything else that may change your body’s center of balance.

Good posture may take extra effort at first, but in time it will come to feel completely natural. You’ll look better, you’ll experience fewer aches and pains, and your feet and ankles will thank you.

The Path to Health



Need a gentle way to invigorate your feet? Try a reflexology walking path. Asians have used these walkways for centuries to massage the nerve endings in the feet and stimulate blood flow. Some studies have even shown that cobblestone paths can reduce blood pressure and improve balance in people 60 years of age and older.

Made of smooth river stones laid in dirt or concrete, the walkways must be used barefoot to have the intended effect. The stones press into the sole of each foot, creating a gentle massage-like feeling similar to traditional reflexology treatments.

These reflexology paths make a perfect addition to gardens, where people often go to relax. Several public parks have incorporated reflexology paths as well, including King County in Seattle, Washington.

If you can’t find a reflexology path nearby, consider building your own. You can create a permanent reflexology path by

pushing smooth stones into wet concrete, then allowing it to dry. Keep comfort and safety in mind when arranging the stones. None should sit more than an inch or two from the ground, and each one should be at approximately the same height.

You can also create a temporary reflexology path by spreading smooth stones on the ground, or purchasing a molded reflexology mat that’s made to simulate a cobblestone path. If you’re creating your own reflexology walkway, make sure there are no sharp edges, and always put materials away when finished so no one trips over them.

Reflexology paths aren’t for everyone. They should not be used by people with diabetes, foot injuries, or osteoporosis. If you’re considering using a reflexology path but aren’t sure if it’s right for you, contact us today.

Fighting Infection

If not properly cared for, your toenails can become a hotbed for infection. Nail fungus starts as a white or yellow spot under the tip of the nail that causes thickening, crumbling, and discoloration as it spreads.

This fungus thrives in warm, damp environments, so it's easy to catch at places like locker rooms and public swimming pools. You may also be at risk if you have sweaty feet or work long hours in a humid environment.

While nail infection isn't the same as athlete's foot, the two are caused by the same kind of fungus and often occur simultaneously. The infection may not hurt at first, but it can create serious problems if left unchecked. Over time, it may cause permanent nail damage or spread infection to other parts of the body.

If you suspect you have a nail infection, contact your podiatrist immediately. He or she will likely scrape some debris from under your nails, then analyze it in a lab. This will help determine if your nail infection is caused by a fungus or microorganisms such as yeast and bacteria.

Once you understand the cause of your infection, you can choose the best treatment. If your infection is severe, we may recommend removing the nail entirely. A new nail will grow in its place, but this could take several months to a year.

We will probably prescribe an oral antifungal agent to help your nail grow free from infection. Other treatments include antifungal "nail polish" and topical medications. While over-the-counter creams exist, they aren't very



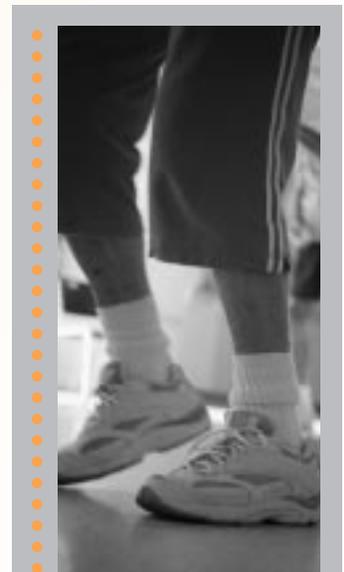
effective and should not be used without contacting us first.

To avoid future infections, practice good foot hygiene at all times. Keep your nails short and your feet clean and dry. When choosing socks, look for synthetic kinds that wick moisture away from your skin. You may also want to try an anti-fungal spray or powder inside your shoes. Finally, always remember to wear flip-flops or other shoes in public places where the fungus may hide. These simple precautions may help you avoid a painful infection.

Diabetic Foot Care

One out of every four people with diabetes will develop a related foot condition at least once in their lifetime. If left unchecked, these foot problems could lead to infection or even amputation. If you have diabetes, you probably already know how important it is to keep your feet healthy. The following tips will help you make sure you're doing everything you can to take care of your feet.

- **Check both feet daily.** Look over each foot and in between the toes to spot the start of blisters or infection. Because diabetes affects the nerves, you may not feel these until they become worse. If you have trouble seeing your feet, ask a family member to help you.
- **Wear shoes that fit well.** Even the slightest pinch can turn into a long-lasting sore. That's why it's important to choose shoes with care. Once you've found a pair that fit, run your fingers over the inside to check for rough seams and sharp edges. Then, break the shoes in slowly by wearing them for only a few hours at a time.
- **Keep feet clean and dry.** Even if you don't shower daily, be sure to wash your feet with warm water each day. Test the temperature with your hands first to avoid burns, then use a mild soap to clean away debris. Once finished, dry your feet with a soft towel, making sure to get in between each toe.
- **Consider orthotics.** A podiatrist may be able to provide custom-fitted shoe inserts that will support your feet and control movement. If it's painful or even impossible to walk, you may need to consider a special foot brace or orthopedic shoes.
- **Control your blood sugar.** The best way to keep your feet healthy is to keep your whole body healthy. Strict glucose control, when balanced with intensive insulin therapy, can help you lower symptoms of peripheral neuropathy by as much as 64 percent.
- **See your doctor regularly.** Even if you pay close attention to your feet, there are things you can miss. That's why it's important to schedule an appointment with us at least once a year to make sure you're as healthy as possible. You'll also be able to ask any questions you have about future foot care.



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Here's your foot and
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Morton's Neuroma

Do you have a sharp, burning pain near the ball of your foot, around the third and fourth toes? You could have Morton's neuroma, a common foot condition that causes the foot bones to squeeze a nerve, causing pain, discomfort, and swelling.

Doctors still don't know what causes Morton's neuroma, but they believe it may have to do with abnormal toe positioning, flat feet, forefoot problems, or high foot arches. Unlike other common foot ailments, Morton's neuroma rarely comes with any visual clues. It's marked instead by a burning pain near the ball of the foot and tingling or numbness in the toes. This pain can last for several days or even weeks.

If you experience foot pain that does not improve with rest and change in footwear, schedule an appointment with us. We will be able to tell if you have Morton's neuroma or another condition. During your appointment, we may order an x-ray or blood tests to rule out other problems.

Once diagnosed with Morton's neuroma, you may have one or more treatment options. Many podiatrists prefer to try conservative measures first. This includes resting the foot, wearing arch supports, and taking over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medicine to reduce pain and swelling.

If this does not work or your pain is severe, you may need injections or even surgery.

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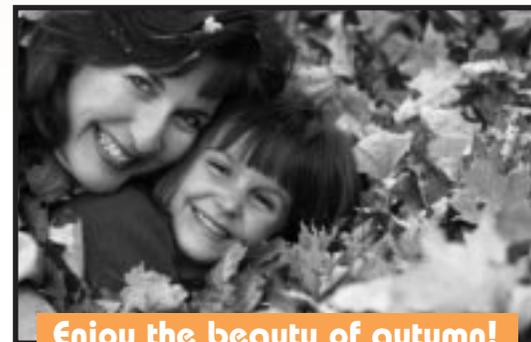
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