



foot notes  
Spring 2011

# SOLEDOC

## Thoughts

### RESPONSIBLE REVOLUTION

The United States' educational ranking has slipped to average in world rankings of 15 years tested. Even more striking is that the United States is the only country belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in which 25–34-year-olds are not better educated than 55–64-year-olds. The OECD includes countries such as Turkey, with an average income of \$6,690 per year; Hungary, \$13,780; and the United States, \$37,500. So much for “the more money, the better the education.”

Somehow we lost our way in expectations of performance, not only from our children but in much of the adult population as well. Across the country we are seeing protests about what unions can or cannot do for workers. The protests should be about the greatest cost yet to come, and that will be a poorly educated populace with less income. The end result will come in the form of far less productivity, which in turn will decrease the standard of living. Who will pay? We all will; those of us approaching retirement and those just entering a career.

Unfortunately, there is no answer that doesn't require hard work and sacrifice. Fiscal responsibility for our education system starts with a fair pay education system and parents who sit down every night with their child, reviewing homework and encouraging educational achievements. By refusing to accept poor achievement, we are all better off: the children, the parents, and the world.

Parents need to parent. Teachers are educators, not baby-sitters. Responsibility for results in education, fitness vs. obesity, achievement vs. failure, begins in the home.

**Start your own: *Revolution! Responsibility! With Results!***

—Donald W. Orminski, D.P.M.



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THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR REFERRALS. WE APPRECIATE THEM!

# Running, dress shoes are double whammy for women

Female runners, especially those who often wear pointy-toed dress shoes at work, are prone to developing a neuroma, a painful condition caused by an enlarged or swollen compressed nerve in the foot.

The combination of wearing narrow, pointed-toe dress shoes and running places females at greater risk for developing a neuroma because the foot is stressed from two different sources, according to foot specialists. Female runners with flat feet are at even greater risk of developing a neuroma.

Running puts stress on the front of the foot that can cause nerve damage from pounding on the pavement.

The most common neuroma in female runners is Morton's neuroma, which affects the ball of the foot under the third and fourth toes, causing burning, shooting, or radiating pain.

High-heeled shoes change the natural position of the foot, also increasing stress on the ball of the foot. Dress shoes also tend to have narrow toe boxes, adding more stress on the nerves in the ball of the foot. Wearing high heels is linked with development of Morton's neuroma.

Treatment of a neuroma depends on the severity of the condition and can include ice for swelling, anti-inflammatory medication, padding the affected area, and rest. Severe cases may require surgery.

Want to avoid neuromas? Make sure your running shoes are adequately cushioned, run on more forgiving surfaces like a track or grass surface instead of pavement, and choose low-heeled dress shoes with wider toe boxes for off-the-track occasions.



## *Ancient Chinese exercise may help peripheral neuropathy*

People with peripheral neuropathy, a nerve disorder, experience numbness and tingling in their hands and feet that may extend to the arms and legs. Numbness may be accompanied by burning pain or sharp jabbing pain as well as sensitivity to touch.

Peripheral neuropathy has a variety of causes, including infection, traumatic injury, exposure to a toxic substance, and diabetes.

Typically, the pain of peripheral neuropathy is managed with pain medication and behavior modification that includes weight management, blood-sugar control, eliminating alcohol and smoking, and gentle exercise.

A recent study conducted at the Department of Kinesiology at Louisiana State University tested the effects of tai chi, the ancient Chinese practice of gentle stretching exercises that promote relaxation, on peripheral neuropathy patients.

After participating in tai chi group exercises for six months, the patients showed improvement in their stamina and symptoms, including better sensation in the plantar—or bottom—region of the feet, an intriguing result that bears further investigation.

If you experience any prolonged numbness or tingling sensations in your feet, make an appointment with us for an evaluation to determine the cause and appropriate remedy.





# What's the bump?

Here's the situation: A strange bump appears on the top of your foot. It isn't painful or irritated, but you wonder what it is and why it has made an appearance on your foot.

Most likely you have a benign ganglion cyst, a relatively common occurrence that also can appear on the wrist.

We don't know for certain why a ganglion cyst develops. It may result from some kind of trauma to a tendon sheath or joint capsule.

Cysts are enclosed in a sac; in a ganglion cyst, the sac is filled with a jelly-like fluid. Because of its structure, a ganglion cyst will move under the skin when manipulated. It can change size over time, becoming larger or smaller, and may even disappear and return.

If it happens to be touching a nerve, the cyst may cause a burning or tingling sensation. If it is impinging on a joint or tendon, you may feel an ache or dull pain.

Since a ganglion cyst is a benign growth, it doesn't require treatment if it isn't causing pain or discomfort.

However, if it is painful or interferes with wearing shoes, we can treat it by removing fluid from the cyst (aspiration) and injecting it with steroid medication. Multiple treatments may be necessary. Occasionally a ganglion cyst requires surgical removal. If you're wondering about a lump or bump, come in for a consultation to determine the proper course of treatment.

# Is your work a pain in the foot?

If you're among the millions of people who stand most or all of the day at work, you know what a pain in the foot that can be. Employees who are on their feet are at greater risk for foot problems.

About two million workers are treated each year for plantar fasciitis, a painful foot problem that in these cases results from working conditions. In plantar fasciitis, stabbing pain is felt in the heel that is caused by inflammation along the plantar fascia, the thick band of tissue that runs lengthwise along the bottom of the foot.

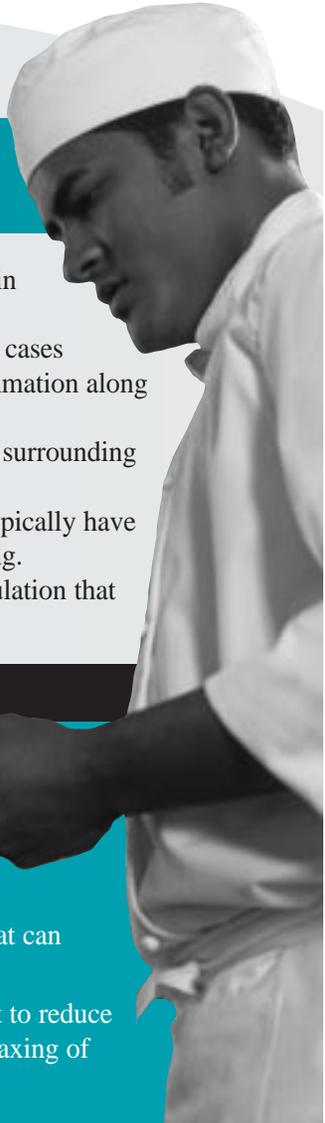
In workplace-related injuries, standing for extended periods places too much stress on the heel bone and surrounding tissue, causing inflammation.

The composition of the floor is a big factor in workplace foot problems. Factories and office buildings typically have concrete flooring that provides no cushioning, even when covered with standard low-pile industrial carpeting.

Standing for extended periods can cause an inflammation of the leg veins (varicose veins) and poor circulation that contributes to foot and ankle swelling, muscle fatigue, and soreness.

## Prevent work-related foot problems:

- Make sure to buy shoes that fit at the end of the day, when your feet are at their largest. Select shoes with cushioned insoles, and add over-the-counter inserts if necessary to provide adequate arch support.
- Check with your employer about providing anti-fatigue floor mats at workstations to cushion the floor surface, reducing strain on the feet, legs, and back. Replace old mats that can become compressed and ineffective over time.
- Give your feet a break. Sit down, elevate the feet, and if necessary, ice the feet at the end of a long shift to reduce swelling. Simple exercises such as rolling a can under the arch of the foot or repetitive tightening and relaxing of the toes can provide a gentle stretch that improves circulation and muscle flexibility.



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## 24/7 flip-flops = *Rx for trouble*

The warm-weather footwear phenomenon, flip-flops, may be cool but comes with a warning. Since flip-flops don't provide support for kids' feet and only minimal cushioning, they can hurt growing feet.

The most common problems experienced by kids who wear flip-flops constantly are arch pain and heel pain. Flip-flops' imprecise sizing and lack of arch support can add to foot fatigue and strained muscles.

Because the heel isn't properly cushioned, flip-flops contribute to repetitive stress from walking and running, inflaming the heel bone growth plate and causing pain and tenderness.

Other problems associated with wearing flip-flops include Achilles tendon inflammation from lack of support, pinched nerves, jammed toes, and fifth-metatarsal fractures and sprained ankles caused by lateral slipping.

Flip-flops are great occasional wear at the pool or beach, but don't let the kids wear them every day.

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## Flip-flop tips

Follow these tips from the American Podiatric Medical Association to avoid flip-flop failures:

- ➔ Pick a quality leather flip-flop to reduce the chance of blisters where the strap fits between the toes.
- ➔ Make sure flip-flops cover the entire bottom of the foot, including the toes.
- ➔ Stop wearing flip-flops at the first sign of between-the-toe irritation to avoid a blister or infection.
- ➔ Diabetics should never wear flip-flops.
- ➔ Don't walk long distances, do yard work, or play sports in flip-flops; they don't provide enough foot protection or support.
- ➔ Look for the American Podiatric Medical Association's Seal of Acceptance on flip-flops that provide good foot support.